



IN THE NAME OF

**ALLAH**

THE ALL COMPASSIONATE, ALL MERCIFUL



# Time Management

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Abu Muawiyah Ismail Kamdar



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Abu Muawiyah Ismail Kamdar

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## Introduction to the Second Edition

*In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

When I first got the idea of writing a book on time management in September 2014, I was really excited and couldn't wait to get started. I immediately started writing it, and was so anxious to share it with the world as soon as possible that I made a rookie mistake.

I self-published it without having it professionally edited or proofread by anybody. The result was a book published in March 2015 which many people found beneficial, but which was also riddled with typing errors. As a perfectionist, I was really embarrassed to have published a book with so many typing errors. However, I definitely learned my mistake. No matter what the cost, every future book that I write will be professionally edited before hitting the market.

However, I was not embarrassed by the book itself. Getting The Barakah is full of tested advice and tools which I believe are beneficial and life-changing to anybody who applies them to their lives, and so I decided to publish a second edition as soon as possible.

I immediately began to comb my book for errors and eliminated as many as possible myself before sending it to a professional editor. As I read through the book looking for errors, I saw an opportunity to publish a more detailed version of the book and began to note down ways to make the book even more beneficial. The end result is a book that is 50 pages longer.

The additional pages include templates of the Time Management tools suggested throughout the book, as well as appendices of articles which I wrote on time management since the publication

of this book, and various edits made to each chapter, wherever I felt additional explanation was needed, or more examples were needed.

I know that human writings can never be perfect and that there is always room for improvement, but I consider this second edition as a huge improvement over the original with more detailed content, more practical tools and more beneficial tips.

Time Management is a field in which you are always upping your game and learning new tricks, so there is always room for expansion in future editions. I look forward to learning more and more time management tools as time passes, and to continue sharing them with you through these books and articles.

Thank you all for your support and I hope you enjoy this second edition of the book even more than you did the original. If you would like to learn more about Time Management and other Self Help topics from an Islamic Perspective, be sure to visit my website <http://islamicselfhelp.com> for various articles, videos and more related to these topics.

*Was Salaam*

*Abu Muazwiyah Ismail Kamdar*



## The many ways to read this book

Self Help books are unique in their practical usage. A good Self-help book is one which requires multiple readings, and one which you keep going back to as a resource very often. I hope that this will be one such book for you.

There are many ways to read a Self-Help book, so here are a few methods I would recommend for reading this book:

### 1 The Quick Read

You can begin by reading through the entire book quickly in order to get an idea of what each chapter is about, familiarize yourself with important concepts and begin implementing the most relevant points to your life. This method is beneficial for anybody looking to get the summary of the book's message, but who doesn't have enough time for a detailed study.

### 2 The Detailed Study

A detailed study would mean absorbing and reflecting on every statement, understanding it properly and figuring out how to use it. This would be a much slower read but also a more transformative one.

A detailed study of a book involves note-taking of some sort. Whether it is highlighting important points in the book, or typing/writing out a summary of the most relevant points as you find them. It also means paying attention to the Action Points section and doing every activity mentioned therein. These methods ensure long term memory, deeper understanding, and are also more likely to lead to implementation.

### **3 The Action Plan**

The third method of reading this book is to focus on the action point sections found at the end of each chapter, and to focus on implementing what is mentioned in those sections. These sections tend to summarize the key points of the chapter, while offering practical advice on applying it to your life.

This method of reading is focused more on implementation. If you are not interested in a detailed discussion and just want to get the key points and implement them, then the action points are where you want to begin. You will also be interested in the chapter on Time Management Tips at the end of the book.

### **4 Picking and Choosing**

If certain chapters are more relevant to your life than others, then you should begin by reading those chapters and then later reading the other chapters. There is no rule that states you have to read the entire book from beginning to end in one go.

### **5 However You Want To**

It's a book and you purchased it, so don't let someone else dictate how you read it, not even the author. If you enjoy it, benefit from it and recommend it to your friends, then that's all the goals of the book accomplished and I really don't care how you reach those goals, as long as you enjoyed the ride. 😊

## No Barakah in Time?

وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

*“By Time! Indeed mankind is at a loss! Except those who believe, do righteous deeds, and assist each other towards the truth and perseverance,” (Surah Al-Asr 103:1-3)*

Reflect on the following conversation, does it sound familiar?

Ahmad: Its Jumuah<sup>1</sup> already! Where did the time go?

Ayesha: Yes, the week just flew by! There is no Barakah<sup>2</sup> in time!

Ahmad: Yes, it’s a sign of the Last Day. We can’t seem to get anything done these days. Between work and taking care of the bills, I don’t have any time for anything else.

Ayesha: I agree! Between the kids and the housework, I haven’t read a book in months!

Ahmad: What to do? That’s life, right?

Ayesha: Yeah. Just have to keep going.

If the above conversation seems familiar to you (or at least some part of it), then I have some good news, you have purchased the right book for you! In this book, I hope to introduce you to some of the most beautiful habits and techniques to make time for everything you ever wanted to do.

Many of us use the excuse that there is no Barakah in time, but I do not believe this to always be the case. Barakah is a gift from

1 Jumuah: The Arabic name for Friday, which is the most important day of the week for Muslims

2 Barakah: Arabic for blessings, refers here to the belief that with Allah’s help, we can get do more in our time than others.

Allah, and He gives it to those who ask for it, and strive for it. So if you haven't asked Allah for Barakah in your time, do so right now! (Yes, close this book, go make dua and return to this page when you are done) If you have asked Allah for Barakah in time but are not seeing any results, perhaps it is because you need to change certain habits in your life and make an effort to earn that Barakah, and that is what this book can help you do.

Over the next few chapters, we will explore many tried and tested techniques and habits (both spiritual and material, all 100% Halal) that can help you manage your time well and fulfil your life's goals.

Before we begin, I would like to mention my story of how I discovered time management and how it helped me organize my life.

Growing up in the 90s and 00s, I grew up in a generation that liked to "kill time" with videogames and movies, and then later complain that we don't have time to do the things that are important to us. Because of this, I grew up with certain bad habits that many of you might share, like playing videogames until odd hours of the night, losing track of time due to some form of entertainment or the other and worst of all...multitasking! (I'm going to discuss that last one in details in a later chapter)

In 2010, I started my job as a Tutorial Assistant at the Islamic Online University and was immediately overwhelmed by the workload. I had to teach six classes a week, answer emails and forum posts and grade hundreds of assignments. I remember sitting with my employer and mentor Dr Bilal Philips in Azizia during the days of Hajj that year. I was complaining about how much work there is, and he told me that I need to find a way to make it work, because the work will only increase over the years.

During my walk back to my hotel, I reflected on what he had said. After returning from Hajj, I decided that I needed to learn some new habits to help me manage my time better. Ever since then for the past five years I have read dozens of books on time management and other self-help topics, and with each book I learned new skills, techniques and habits to help me maximize my time and get the most out of my days.

Alhamdulillah, today I am the Head Tutorial Assistant at IOU, i teach 12 hours a week for the same university, grade over 1000 assignments a semester, home-school my children, write articles and books, teach at other institutes, and do many other things in the day and week.

I believe this is a result of two things:

1. Dua for Barakah in time.
2. Constantly striving to improve how I utilize my time.

So it was in September 2014 that I got the idea to write this book. It has been my goal and ambition for a while to write about this topic. I had already written articles, taught webinars and shared tips on Facebook regarding Time Management.

**“One who wastes his time, wastes his fields. One who wastes his fields, regrets at the time of harvest” – Sufyan At-Thawree**

However, I still felt there was a major gap that needed to be filled. Most of the time management books on the market were from a secular perspective, (but are definitely worth reading) and the Islamic ones were either too brief to do justice to the topic or too detailed for the average person to read. So I made it my goal to write this book, which I pray will be the first of many in a series on Islamic Self-Help books.

This book is my gift to you. I wanted to share with you some of the main tools, tips, habits and tricks I utilize to make the most out of every day, so that you too can do the same, and together we can all maximize how we use our time on this earth. This way, we can all slowly make this world a better place.

Over the next few chapters, we will explore key beliefs, habits and tips to improve your management of your time. Each chapter will end with a series of Action Points. It is highly recommended that you do these activities, experiment with them and experience the difference for yourself.

This is a practical book, so it is not enough to just read it, comment on how much you enjoyed it and then put it away on your shelf. Rather, you should try out the techniques mentioned herein and make efforts to incorporate them into your life. Do this and you will gain maximum benefits from it.

I ask Allah to help me complete every book in this series, to accept it from us, and to make it beneficial and life-changing for the reader. Ameen.

**Action Point:**

Read the rest of this book 😊

## Accountability for Our Time

### An Islamic Perspective

To understand this chapter, we need to look at a commonly misunderstood term, Rizq. Rizq refers to everything that Allah has provides us with; we can translate it as resources. Rizq is not restricted to wealth and material resources as many people think. The resources that Allah has provided us with are many. They include wealth, health, youth, family, friends, safety, knowledge, intellectual capabilities and, what concerns us most in this book, time.

In order to truly appreciate the importance of time management, we must understand and acknowledge that time is a part of our Rizq. It is a resource that Allah has provide to us, just like our health and wealth. There are two special qualities about time that separate it from the other types of Rizq we receive:

1. Every human is provided with the exact same amount of time in a day.
2. Time is the only resource that is not renewable. Once it is used, it is gone forever.

Time is similar to other resources in that only Allah knows how much time each person has in this world.

Some live for a short time and accomplish great things, because they value that time. Some live for a long time without accomplishing anything, because they did not realize the value of time until it was too late.

**“Time is like a sword: if you don’t cut it, it will cut you.”(Imaam Ash-Shafi’ee)**

Each of the above points has a direct repercussion on the way we think about time. The following three points should make us realize how precious a resource our time really is:

1. As every human has the exact same amount of time per day as another, there is nothing we can do to increase our time, but we can have an edge over others in how we manage our time.
2. As time is not renewable, it would be foolish to waste it or kill it. Why waste a precious resource that you are never going to get back?
3. As we don't know how much time we really have on this earth, can we really afford to waste time now and wait until later in life to do things that are important to us?

With this in mind, it becomes clear that time is a precious resource from Allah that must be used for good. We can also understand that wasting time is like wasting money. Rather it is worse! Because you can always make up for lost money, but you can never make up for time that has been lost.

The Hadiths related to time become very clear when we analyse them from this perspective. Reflect on the following Hadiths in light of the above:

عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِرَجُلٍ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ  
اِغْتَنِمْ خَمْسًا قَبْلَ خَمْسٍ شَبَابَكَ قَبْلَ هَرَمِكَ وَصِحَّتَكَ قَبْلَ سَقَمِكَ وَغِنَاكَ  
قَبْلَ فَقْرِكَ وَفَرَاغَكَ قَبْلَ شُغْلِكَ وَحَيَاتَكَ قَبْلَ مَوْتِكَ

“Take benefit of five before five: Your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before you are preoccupied, and your life before your death” (Narrated by Ibn Abbas and reported by Al Hakim)



### **Author's Reflection:**

1. Everything mentioned in this Hadith is a type of Rizq: youth, health, wealth, free time and our life as a whole
2. Therefore we must be very careful in how we utilize each of the above
3. Notice that the Hadith mentions free time and not time as a whole. Due to the necessities of life, there are times in the day that we have to do certain things (Work, Salah) and we can't use that time for anything else, so it's really how we utilize our free time that matters.

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُورٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ الصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ

*"There are two blessings which many people lose: (They are) health and free time for doing good." (Bukhari 8/421)*

### **Author's Reflection:**

1. This Hadith focuses on two resources: health and free time.
2. Both of these are necessary resources for doing good deeds. It is difficult to do good deeds without good health or enough time to do it properly.
3. These are two things that most people take for granted. For some reason, we don't appreciate these blessings from Allah until they are taken away from us.
4. The best way to show appreciation to Allah for a blessing is to use it as a tool for good. Therefore, our free time must be utilized and we cannot allow it to be wasted.

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يُؤْذِنِي ابْنُ آدَمَ يَسُبُّ الدَّهْرَ وَأَنَا الدَّهْرُ بِيَدِي الْأَمْرُ أَقْلِبُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ

*“Allah said, ‘The son of Adam wrongs me for he curses Ad-Dahr (Time); though I am Ad-Dahr (Time). In My Hands are all things, and I cause the revolution of day and night’ (Al-Bukhari)*

**Author’s Reflection:**

1. In this Hadith Al-Qudsi<sup>1</sup>, Allah says that He is Time. The scholars clarify this to mean that time is controlled and provided to us by Allah. It is a blessing from Allah and so cursing it is like cursing Allah.
2. When we feel that time is slipping away and that we don’t have enough time to accomplish what we want in life, don’t curse time because you were given the same amount of time in a day as everybody else. Rather, take that moment to analyse how you spent your time and what you can do differently.

The above Hadiths all indicate the same thing, that the true believer understands the importance of time and refuses to waste it. It is a precious asset that is deteriorating every second, and so an hour wasted is an hour that we can never get back.

This creates a mind-set that is focused on keeping track of time and utilizing it to the best of our abilities. If we are only going to be in this world for a limited period of time, and during that time we need to balance our duties towards our Creator, our families, our society and ourselves then the only way to get that done is with strict time management.

This is what I hope to accomplish in this book, to assist you to gain the necessary tools and habits that can help you get the best out of your day. These tools can be used in our work life, study life, family life, leisure time and spiritual life. In fact, when used properly, these tools help us to balance between all of these

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1 Hadith Al-Qudsi: A Hadith narration quoting Allah directly. It is considered a separate category from a Hadith quoting the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

parts of our lives and that is the correct way for a believer to live, a balanced life, never wasting any time, always working towards a higher goal.

Now that we understand the importance of time management in Islam, let's not waste any! Turn the page and begin reading the first step towards managing your time, the Halal way!

**I have never regretted anything as much as my regret over a day on which the sun sets and my life span decreases while my good deeds have not increased.  
(Ibn Masood)**

## The First Step

# Living with a Purpose

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

*“Do you think that We had created you in play (without any purpose), and that you would not be brought back to Us?” (Surah Al-Muminoon 23:115)*

The primary motive for wanting to manage time is having goals which require the management of time. It is here that many people fail. Many of us go through life without any goals or purpose. We drone on through day after day, going through the motions of life with a sense of fear, anxiety and boredom. To fill this void, we surround ourselves with a lot of entertainment to drown out the voice of our souls so that we are distracted from thinking, and so that we are killing time.

For a Muslim, this is a sign of not understanding a basic fundamental of our religion i.e. we were created for a purpose and this world is just a testing ground to see who will live up to that purpose and who will not.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

*“And I did not create Jinn and Humans except to worship me,”  
(Surah Adh-Dhariyat 51:56)*

The purpose of life is to worship Allah as stated in this verse. This is agreed upon and accepted by all Muslims, but where we fail is in understanding how to transform that purpose from theory into practical reality.

This lies in understanding what worshipping Allah means, and how we can fulfil that. The Islamic definition of worship

is servitude i.e. to obey and serve Allah. So our goal is not to engage 24/7 in acts of worship, but rather to live our lives in accordance to the teachings of Islam. What are some of these teachings that relate directly to time management?

### **1. Muslims must strive to benefit humanity.**

One of the primary methods in which we can serve Allah is by taking care of His Creation. There are many ways in which we can benefit the creation of Allah, be it through teaching, counselling, medical practice, humanitarian efforts or just giving someone hope and happiness.

In order to practice this, you need to identify something you are passionate about that can benefit others, then to manage your time around fulfilling that goal. In that way, you are now living with a purpose, worshipping Allah through benefitting His Creation and representing Him on earth.

### **2. Muslims must propagate the message of Islam to others.**

Dawah is a fundamental of our religion and each of us can contribute to it by being good Muslims so that people can see Islam in our actions, and by educating our friends, co-workers and families about Islam. When Dawah becomes a fundamental part of your life, you have yet another purpose to work towards and another reason to manage your time well.

### **3. We must study and understand Islam in order to obey Allah properly.**

It is not possible to live a life of obedience to Allah if we do not know the laws of Allah. Therefore, it is obligatory upon Muslims to learn Islam and work towards a gradual increase in beneficial knowledge. If continuous progress in seeking Islamic knowledge becomes a fundamental part of your life, then you

have yet another purpose and reason around which to manage your time.

This shows us how directly linked time management is to being a Muslim.

In fact, when we look at the acts of worship in Islam, many of the ritual Ibaadah in Islam are time-bound acts of worship.

For example, Salah is prayed five times a day at specific times. The habit of praying five times a day naturally creates a sense of time management in an individual, if done properly. Fasting is at a specific month of the year, as is Hajj, both help us keep track of which month of the year it is. Zakah is an annual thing, which is once again related to time.

Time seems to factor into every major part of our religion, and therefore in order to live fulfilling lives, we need to manage our time properly.

Understanding our purpose in life and setting particular goals to help you live up to that purpose is the fundamental first step towards time well-managed.

## **Formulating Life Goals**

Once you recognize the purpose of life, the next step to effective time management is to formulate personal goals that assist you in fulfilling your purpose. These goals should be such that they align your natural talents, passions and skills with the purpose of life, creating a path through life which you are passionate about, and at the same time which is pleasing to Allah.

Goal-setting is very empowering. People who have clear goals wake up earlier and full of energy, ready and excited to tackle the next day. They feel happier and more fulfilled because their

lives have direction. They feel more confident because they are working towards something greater.

The goals you set should utilize your skills but more importantly, they must be pleasing to Allah. For example, if you are a skilled writer then make it your goal in life to write beneficial books or articles. If you are passionate about business, make it your goal in life to set up businesses that benefit people and provide value to their lives. If you enjoy being around children, consider teaching as a profession. Find your skill and choose a noble goal that you can pursue with that skill.

Once you have goals, life changes. Everything becomes focused and purposeful. Each day has an objective and you have a reason to wake up and pursue your daily goals and tasks. This one huge change in one's life creates a higher level of confidence as your life is driven and purposeful.

A worthy goal is something that seems impractical to pessimists, yet attainable to optimists. It is something long term that cannot be accomplished overnight. It requires foresight, visualization and the ability to see optimistically into the distant future. It is something that you will need to dedicate years of your life towards before seeing the fruit of it. Despite all this, it is something worth dedicating your life to and the end result is worth all the effort and patience.

Most Self-Help books offer the S.M.A.R.T. formula for goal setting as this formula is simple, yet effective. It covers the five main criteria to consider when setting a goal, so we will utilize the same model here.

### **A S.M.A.R.T. goal refers to a goal that is:**

**Specific** – This means that your goal shouldn't be something vague. It should be something specific that you want to work

towards. “I want to be an author” is a vague goal, but “I want to write a book about self-confidence from an Islamic perspective” is a very specific goal.

**Measurable** – This means that your goal should be something you can keep track of to measure how close you are to completing your goal. Goals are generally long term projects and without any form of measurement, it is difficult to know whether you are closer to accomplishing it or not. An example of a measurable goal is setting a goal to write one hundred pages a month by writing three and half pages a day.

**Attainable** – This means your goal should be something you can work towards and attain. If your goal is to build a multi-million dollar Islamic Centre and you don’t have the resources to do so, then this is not an attainable goal and should either be left for later in life or tweaked to become more attainable.

**Realistic** – This means your goal must be something you have the ability to do and something you are willing to do. If you hate writing, then making it a goal to write a 500 page book is not realistic, even though it is attainable. Being realistic means knowing what you are good at, what you are willing to sacrifice for, and making your goals in line with that.

**Timely** – Finally, a goal must have a time limit. As long as you leave something without any time limit, you will not feel the urgency to work on it. Saying that “Someday I want to write a 300 page book” is not going to help you write it. Setting a goal to write the book within three months by writing four pages a day is a timely goal, and creates the sense of urgency needed to get things done.

These five qualities help us make our goals achievable by creating the kind of description, pattern and system necessary to make sure we get it done. When setting your goals, weigh



each goal in light of all five criterion to fine-tune it until you have a concrete plan to work with.

Once you have a S.M.A.R.T. goal, you now have something concrete to manage your time around. For example, if your goal is to write a book, then you will now have to dedicate an hour a day to writing three pages a day. This fits right in with effective time management as you now know exactly what you want to accomplish and your daily tasks are working towards these larger goals, instead of just keeping you busy.

### *Focusing on Allah*

In his book “the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” Stephen Covey talks about the different centres that people have in their lives which includes money, family, spouse and friends and he recommends that people should centre their lives around principles as this will make them more effective. There is no doubt that living a principle centred life is more effective than the above mentioned things. However, the one flaw in this theory is in who decides on what principles one should centre one’s life around?

Without a set basis, anything can become a principle and sometimes wrong things are justified because they agree with people’s principles. For example, homosexuality is accepted based on the principle of freedom while polygamy is not. Yet if the principle of religion is applied, it would be the other way round. This raises the question: Who decides on which principles are worth revolving one’s life around?

This is why I propose an alternative, an Allah-centred life. By choosing to revolve our lives around Allah and His Laws we are living principle-centred lives, but these principles are not conjured by our imaginations. Rather they are divinely revealed

principles found in the book of Allah and so they are in our best interests. For a Muslim, there is no other path towards true excellence than living an Allah-centred life.

## **Salah and Dua**

**Sacrifice**

**Good  
Character**

## **Allah Centered**

**Patience**

**Ihsaan**

## **Wisdom**

### *Salah and Time Management*

Part of living an Allah-centred life is to make Salah a priority in one's life. Some Muslims make the mistake of trying to fit Salah

into their daily schedule and complain that they can't find the time to pray.

### **The mistake is twofold:**

- 1) Trying to find time, instead of making time
- 2) Fitting Salah into your schedule, instead of planning your schedule around Salah

As Muslims, Salah should be our highest priority in the day and as such, when making our timetable/schedule, the first thing we need to fill in are the Salah times so that nothing else clashes with it. In fact, fill in the Salah times in RED and BOLD writing so that you know that those times are off-limits to anything else.

### **Doing this has multiple benefits:**

1. Our number one duty to Allah is now scheduled and won't be missed.
2. It helps us learn discipline and punctuality.
3. It is pleasing to Allah and without Allah's pleasure; we can't gain His Assistance in fulfilling our goals.

Salah should be a priority in our lives, however it should not be just a ritual. In order to truly benefit from Salah, we need to pray it properly with concentration, understanding and sincerity. It is only when Salah is prayed in this manner that we can gain maximum benefit from it.

Sincerity is the first obligation. We must pray Salah solely for the pleasure of Allah, not to please people or "just to get it over with". Salah must be done consciously as a means of getting closer to the Creator.

After sincerity, the next condition is understanding. The best way to understand what we are reciting is to learn Arabic, yet

for many Muslims this is difficult and unlikely. The next best step then is to at least learn the translation and explanation of what you recite in your Salah.

Besides understanding, we also must pray Salah with concentration. Salah is in many ways an exercise in focus, concentration and developing inner peace. Allah has described the true believers as, “Those who pray their Salah with Khushoo (concentration and inner peace),”<sup>1</sup> as well as, “Those who guard their Salah”<sup>2</sup> by not missing a prayer on time.

Sincerity and understanding help us to concentrate in our Salah. Beyond that, it is a matter of self-discipline. Focus on being in the moment, do not think about what you are going to do after Salah, or where your keys are. Focus on Allah and developing a relationship with Him. This is your best training in developing inner peace. If you can experience inner peace during Salah, then you are on your way to righteousness.

All of this assists us in gaining necessary time management skills as time management requires focus, self-discipline and concentration. Salah trains us in all of these skills.

## Dua and Barakah

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي  
سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

*“And your Lord says: Call on me, and I will definitely answer you. Indeed whoever is too arrogant to worship me will enter the Hellfire humiliated,” (Surah Al-Ghafir 40:60)*

Muslims have an edge over others in that a strong connection with Allah can lead to the gift of having Barakah (blessings) in

1 Surah Al-Muminoon 23:2

2 Surah Al-Muminoon 23:9

one's time. Barakah is a difficult concept to explain; it is in many ways mysterious. Barakah refers to the idea of getting more out of something than people usually can. For example, some people live off incredibly low salaries yet are able to purchase everything they need and live happily, while others earning much more than them are struggling to pay their bills.

Of course, the above case could be explained as simple money management, but sometimes the wealthier person is better at managing money but still doesn't experience any blessings in it.

Another example of this is charity. The Qur'an states that "(Allah) increases charity"<sup>1</sup> which means that Allah gives more to those who spend their wealth in charity. This concept has been accepted even by secularists as a mysterious law of the universe which they call the law of attraction or the law of abundance. Even atheists have experienced increased wealth in mysterious ways when they are charitable. This is the essence of Barakah, a mysterious increase that people can't explain, except as a gift from Allah.

The concept of Barakah applies to time as well. Many people are able to accomplish more in an hour than others can in 6 hours. Some people are able to pack more value and content into a ten minute speech than others can into an hour long lecture. Then of course, there are historical examples of scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah and Imam An-Nawawi, who wrote so many books in their lifetimes, that it doesn't add up to the number of years they lived in this world. It just seems impossible to have accomplished so much in such a short period of time.

When sceptics hear these stories of Barakah in time, they ignore them and write them off as exaggerated or fabricated. Reality is that the legacies of these people are still with us, we still

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1 Surah Al-Baqarah 2:276

have many of their books, and reading them all will take years of intensive study. The existence of these books is proof that scholars of the past had Barakah in their time.

The question we need to ask ourselves then is how we too can gain this Barakah? What can we do to get Divine assistance in squeezing more into a day than seems humanly possible?

The answer lies primarily in developing a strong relationship with Allah and formulating our life goals to be noble goals that are pleasing to Allah. If our lives are pleasing to Allah, and our goals are things which He approves then we can expect His Divine Assistance in accomplishing them, which includes Barakah in our time.

Another factor that must be considered is dua. Dua is a concept that many Muslims underappreciate and don't utilize enough. Allah tells us in the Qur'an "Call on Me, I will answer you,"<sup>1</sup> and so we have direct access to Allah at all times, and can call on Him whenever we need Him.

Yet many people have ritualized dua, and many others don't make dua except at times of extreme difficulty. Even worse, many others turn to other than Allah and pray to Saints and Graves, instead of praying directly to the Creator.

Once you realize that you have a direct connection with Allah through dua, and that everything in this universe is under His control, then dua becomes a part of your daily habits.

A true believer cannot afford to live without dua. Allah controls everything so ask Him for assistance in everything. Ask Him for Barakah in time. Ask Him for assistance in accomplishing your goals. Ask Him to send the resources to accomplish your goals. Turn to Allah, embrace His Presence and Power and tap into His Limitless resources through dua.

1 Surah Al-Ghafir 40:60

## Action Points:

- Make a list of all the important principles that you need to follow in order to live a life centred on the pleasure of Allah. Such a list will make you more focused and disciplined.

For Muslims, these principles are already spelt out for us in the Qur'an and Sunnah and all we need to do is research them and adopt them into our lives. Some principles that we all need for success include integrity, honesty, truthfulness, self-discipline, responsibility, respect, empathy and mercy. These principles will help us to live a more productive and fulfilling life, and will reduce many of the problems we deal with.

- When planning your day, take note of the Salah times and block them out as not flexible time.

There is no compromise on the issue of Salah for a Muslim. It is our fundamental duty to Allah and we need to give it priority over everything else, including meals and rest. Salah comes first, and once we establish praying all five Salah on time as a daily habit, it becomes easier to organize the rest of our lives around it, and it also creates a sense of Barakah in our lives and time.

- Take some time to reflect on your strongest qualities and how you can use those qualities to benefit the ummah. Make a plan of action that includes developing your strengths and utilizing them on a daily basis to make this world a better place.

Allah has blessed each of us with unique strengths and abilities. Identifying yours will help you decide what you would like to do with your life and how you can best contribute to this ummah. For example, at a young age I learned that I am gifted at writing, so I have always wanted to be an author. Alhamdulillah, today I am able to use that

gift for good. You too can do the same when you introspect and figure out what your gifts are.

- Figure out what your goals are and make them S.M.A.R.T. If your life goals are very vague, you will not likely be able to accomplish them or measure how close or far you are from success. Make every goal as specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound as possible. Focus on goals that are pleasing to Allah, meaningful to you, and beneficial to society. These are the kind of goals that give people the most happiness and satisfaction.



## The Second Step

# Regaining Control of Your Life

### *The Rat Race – At-Takaathur*

We may not realize it, but many of us live our lives in autopilot droning through each day, rushing from one task to another without any real clue of why, or ever stopping to think if there is another way.

Think about it? For most people, life is all about rushing to work, family, social obligations, entertainment and taking care of necessities. The average person has so much going on in a single day that he/she doesn't have time to even think or breathe. We feel busy, we feel rushed but most of all we feel empty and we don't know how to break the cycle. Many people refer to it as a rat race, the Quran calls it Takaathur.

أَلْهَاكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ ۖ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ۗ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۖ ثُمَّ كَلَّا  
سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۖ كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ ۖ لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ  
ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ ۖ ثُمَّ لَسَأَلَنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ

*“The competition to pile up the good things of this world (At-Takaathur) distracts you, until you visit the graves (i.e. until you die), No! Then you will come to know! Again, No! Then you will definitely come to know! No! If only you had true knowledge! (Of the end of a person who chases this world) You will definitely see Hell-fire! You shall see it with your own eyes! Then, on that day you will be asked about how you spent the bounty (that Allah blessed you with).” (Surah At-Takhaathur 102:1-8)*

Many of us are so busy with television, video games, movies, music, sports, work, social media, family and society that we

have no time to even think about Allah or Islam, leave alone study Islam or practise it or fulfil our goals. It is as Allah has described in the above Surah. This is the rat race, and do we really want to wait until we leave this world to realize how much time we wasted?

We can realize that right now, and make a change today. There is no reason to delay. There is no reason to leave it for later. We need to regain control of our lives by taking out time to take account of ourselves and removing from our lives any unnecessary stuff that is holding us back from reaching our full potential.

The key here is simple, step away from the rat race for a few hours and take a look at your life. Take a long hard look at where you are headed and whether your current lifestyle is moving you towards your goals. If you haven't done this before, you are most likely to realize that this is not the case. We are so distracted and blinded by keeping up with others that in the process we forget our own priorities, goals, dreams and duties.

One of the keys to time management is to be in charge of your time, to control your time so that your time doesn't control you. This is why it is called time management, we need to manage our time just like we would manage any other important resource in our lives and this starts with an evaluation of our time and how we are currently using it. That is followed by making a plan of action to utilize it properly.

### *How people perceive time*

Studies have shown that most people fit into one of two categories in their perception of time. These categories show us whether that person is naturally good at time management or

needs to learn it. These two categories are 'in time' and 'through time'.

People who are 'in time' are people who live in the moment. They don't usually think too far ahead and like to enjoy whatever they are doing at that very moment. Such people usually experience more happiness and enjoy life better than others, but on the flipside, they also tend to be late for appointments, and generally lack time management skills because they don't plan ahead.

'Through time' people are people who view time as boxes, and plan how they are going to use each hour or minute of their day. These people are naturally good at time management, and usually quite punctual but the downside is that they end up being so focused on what to do next, that they find it difficult to enjoy whatever they are doing at the moment.

Sayedra Habib explains the difference as follows:

NLP explains that time preferences fall into two main categories. Either a person naturally prefers to be 'in time' or they prefer to be 'through time'. People who prefer to be 'in time' are not great at planning and often lose track of time. They may often be late for appointments because they became engrossed in doing something. People who are naturally inclined to be 'through time' are often very good planners. They like to have an organized diary, and they may be very conscious about planning their future.<sup>1</sup>

The key is to find a balance between these two perspectives. To live our lives thinking long term, planning, being on time but at the same time relaxing and enjoying being in the moment when spending time with family or having fun. Whichever side of the

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1 SayedraHabib, Discover the best in you! p. 172

spectrum you are on, it will take some learning and adjustment to find that balance.

Yet finding that balance is necessary for time management. Some may argue that those who are in time are already effectively managing their time but it is not always true. As such people may have difficulty enjoying the time they allocated for relaxation or recreation because they are too concentrated on the next goal. So they too need to find that balance, just like those who are moving through time.

### *Taking Stock of Your Time*

A simple way to do this is to be your own time critic for a day. This means that for one day you will monitor every action you do like a police officer watching a criminal. If you spend just one day taking a note of whatever you did for each hour of the day, then sat down in the evening to analyse how you spend your time, you might be in for quite a shock.

In this way, you will be able to see exactly when and how you are wasting time. Once you know that, you can begin working out better ways to spend that time and better things to use it for. Do not underestimate the importance of this step. Keeping in mind the famous 80/20 principle, it would not be a surprise to find that someone who is not accustomed to time management on average wastes the majority of his or her time and only uses a minority of time productively.

The 80/20 principle is an economic principle which indicates that often 20% of the tasks that we do produce 80% of our results, and vice versa. We need to take stock of our time in order to identify what are our high value tasks that contribute the most to our success, as well as what are the things that are wasting most of our time.

There are many examples in our daily lives of the 80/20 principle at work. We pray only 5 times a day, yet it is more spiritually beneficial than how we spend the majority of our day. We eat three times a day, yet it benefits us for the entire day.

Even at work, certain tasks carry more weight than others. The time you spend on personal development is more important than many of the mundane administrative tasks you may do at work. It may take just an hour a day to focus on personal development, but it has life changing effects. While the admin work could take hours and have no long term impact in your life.

Our entire lives are made up of smaller tasks having more impact than larger tasks but we don't recognize it. When we do, however, the entire game changes. You now know what to focus on and how to leverage your time properly.

For example, if you know that teaching is your most productive task and you only teach two hours a week, you can focus on increasing the quality of those classes and the number of classes you teach a week. You can eliminate other tasks that are wasting time or not benefitting anyone and utilize that same time for teaching instead.

Likewise, you may have four business ventures but the smallest one is actually bringing in the most profits. By realizing this, you can focus more time and money on that business and slowly phase out those businesses that are not bringing in any profit.

Understand that the way the 80/20 principle works in our business and personal lives helps us identify what is working and what is wasting time. There is no set-rule of 80% and 20%, it is just a phrase which generally means that the things we spend less time doing tend to have more impact, while the things we spend more time doing tend to have less benefit. Utilize this

principle to evaluate the things in your life and you will see this for yourself.

This system of taking account of our time fits in well with the Islamic concept of not wasting time, and understanding that we are responsible for how we spend every hour of our lives. It is also very similar to the classical Islamic method of purifying our souls called *Muhaasabah*.

*Muhaasabah* translates into English as taking account for oneself or introspection, and is the system of checking our hearts and intentions regularly. We can apply the same concept to time management and understand that we need to stay in control of our time, just as we need to be in control of our desires.

### *Systems of Time Management*

If you have done the above, you now realize that you are wasting at least 4-6 productive hours of your day and are probably thinking of a method to manage your time better. In this next section, I will introduce you to a few such methods.

Each of us has a different lifestyle and as a result, there is no one-size-fits-all system of time management. What I will list here are the most effective systems from my experience and for which type of personality I think each system is suitable.

### *The Seven Day Planner*

When I first started managing my time, I adopted the seven-day planner system from Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and utilized it for two years. This system proved to be very useful and helped me organize myself and get everything done on time, and was the perfect system for me until 2014.

In 2014, I started home-schooling my children and needed a more flexible system to accommodate them. I will discuss that system in the next section.

The 7-day planner basically means to make a list of each hour of the day for a full seven day week and list for each hour of the day what you will be doing.<sup>1</sup>

The advantage of the 7-day Planner is that it gives you a concrete plan for the days ahead and you never find yourself sitting and wondering what you need to do next. Everything is clear and systemized. For the highly organized professional, the 7-Day Planner is an excellent system.

The disadvantage of this system is that it lacks flexibility. To deal with this, I initially used to schedule in flexible time every day i.e. one hour of extra time which I would use for anything I could not complete in its due time. However, such a system might be too constricting to follow for people who have more hectic lifestyles like working mums, home-schooling parents or people who are always involved in meetings across multiple organizations. For such people I propose the next system.

### *The To-Do List*

Never underestimate the value of a good To-Do List. I started using the To-Do list system in late 2013 when my obligations were piling up and found it very valuable. In 2014, I adopted the To-Do List as my primary tool for time management, with the 7-Day Planner playing more of a background secondary role.

The beauty of the To-Do List is that it takes less than five minutes to put together on a daily basis, yet saves you hours of wasted time. To ensure greater efficiency, I type up yearly, monthly,

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<sup>1</sup> A template of the 7 Day planner is available at the back of the book in the Templates Chapter.

weekly and daily To-Do Lists, with the daily list playing the key role in how I manage my time.

The To-Do list is ideal for someone who has a lot of things to do every day but lacks the luxury of organizing their time into set chunks as per the 7-day planner. It serves as a reminder of every task that needs to be accomplished, and there is a sense of accomplishment one feels every time you tick a task off the list.

Organizing a To-Do List is a simple process. Simply write down everything you need to do the next day in a list, then organize it according to priority and work accordingly throughout the day, ticking off each task as it is done.

This system is ideal for people who need a flexible form of time management but it lacks a structure and as a result, if you lack self-discipline or forget to check it often, you might find it ineffective as a time management tool. If that is the case, I would suggest the next method.

### *The Hybrid Method*

I am currently using a hybrid method of time management which combines each of the above methods, taking the best of both. After much experimentation, I found that I work best with a To-Do List with a 7-Day schedule in the background.

This means that each day I focus on ticking off every task on my To-Do List but have some set times for important tasks in my mind, eg: 9am-12am for home-schooling the children and 3pm-4pm for writing my books. So my day is not very tightly restricted and is flexible enough to accommodate the issues and emergencies that pop up in our daily lives. This is the system I currently use and it is, in my view, the most balanced until I discover something even better.



Now we know where our time is being wasted; when and how too. We have a few tools and systems to explore in taking our time back and managing it effectively. Next we will explore how to prioritize and the importance of prioritization in effective time management. But first, let's try out these interesting tools.

### **Action Points:**

- For one day, keep a diary of everything you did in that day. Break it down into hours and write down exactly what you did for each hour of the day. See the examples on the next page for details.
- In the evening, sit and reflect on the list. Work out how much time you spent productively, how much time you wasted and what caused you to waste time.
- Alternatively, you can utilize the Daily Task Evaluation Form to measure the worth of each task you did in a day. The form is available at the back of the book. See the example in this section for how to utilize this form.
- Experiment and try out one of the three tools for time management mentioned above for a week each, and see which one works out best for you. You can use the templates at the back of the book to experiment with this.

## Eg of First Entry Diary Evaluated

### *Diary:*

- 6:00am – Woke up, ate breakfast, changed \_\_\_\_\_
- 7:00am – Sitting in traffic on way to work \_\_\_\_\_
- 8:00am – Greeted Co-Workers, discussed last night's soccer match, checked emails \_\_\_\_\_
- 9:00am – Still checking emails, watched some YouTube Videos, took a personal call \_\_\_\_\_
- 10:00am – Did some work \_\_\_\_\_
- 11:00am – Attended staff meeting, can't remember what it was about \_\_\_\_\_
- 12:00pm – lunch break \_\_\_\_\_
- 1:00pm – Prayed Dhuh, chatted to co-workers about how boring staff meetings are \_\_\_\_\_
- 2:00pm – Did some work \_\_\_\_\_
- 3:00pm – Watched some YouTube videos, phoned home to find out what's for dinner \_\_\_\_\_
- 4:00pm – Can't remember what I did, was too tired to do anything \_\_\_\_\_
- 5:00pm – Sitting in traffic on way home \_\_\_\_\_
- 6:00pm – Watched the news and Sports Highlights \_\_\_\_\_
- 7:00pm – Had Dinner \_\_\_\_\_
- 8:00pm – Watched some sitcoms \_\_\_\_\_

## Eg of First Entry Diary Evaluated

### *Diary:*

- 6:00am – Woke up, ate breakfast, changed (**Need to wake up an hour early for Fajr**)
- 
- 7:00am – Sitting in traffic on way to work (**Wasted Time, no control over this**)
- 
- 8:00am – Greeted Co-Workers, discussed last night's soccer match, checked emails (**Could have been used better**)
- 
- 9:00am – Still checking emails, watched some YouTube Videos, took a personal call (**I did 10 minutes of work in two hours**)
- 
- 10:00am – Did some work (**Needed to do this more during the day**)
- 
- 11:00am – Attended staff meeting, can't remember what it was about (Need to pay attention next time)
- 
- 12:00pm – lunch break (**Could have used my lunch time more productively**)
- 
- 1:00pm – Prayed Dhuhr, chatted to co-workers about how boring staff meetings are (**Should have gotten back to work straight after Salah**)
- 
- 2:00pm – Did some work (**Needed to do this more during the day**)
- 
- 3:00pm – Watched some YouTube videos, phoned home to find out what's for dinner (**Wasted another hour**)
- 
- 4:00pm – Can't remember what I did, was too tired to do anything (**Need to find a way to avoid burnout at this time of the day**)
- 
- 5:00pm – Sitting in traffic on way home (**Wasted Time, no control over this**)
- 
- 6:00pm – Watched the news and Sports Highlights (**Kids felt neglected, should have made time for them**)
- 
- 7:00pm – Dinner Time
- 
- 8:00pm – Watched some sitcoms
- 
- 9:00pm – Still watching sitcoms
- 
- 10:00pm – Fell asleep watching sitcoms, went to bed at
- 
- 11:00pm– (**Spent a total of four hours watching TV, if I cut it down to 2 hours. I will have 2 hours free in the evening for personal development. Need better hobbies**)
-

After identifying wasted time and rescheduling, a new diary entry would look something like this

**Diary:**

- 5:00am – Woke up, prayed Fajr, Recited Qur'an, exercised
- 6:00am – Ate breakfast, changed, left for work
- 7:00am – Sitting in traffic on way to work listening to a lecture on my car radio
- 8:00am- Greeted Co-Workers, checked emails and made a list of all important tasks for the day
- 9:00am – Did most important tasks for work
- 10:00am – Did some more work
- 11:00am – Attended staff meeting, took down notes
- 12:00pm – Lunch break
- 1:00pm – Prayed Dhuhr, shared work ideas with co-workers
- 2:00pm – Did some work
- 3:00pm – Prayed Asr and read some articles to assist in improving work performance
- 4:00pm – Finalized work and rounded up all tasks for the day, made a list of tasks to do the next day
- 5:00pm – Sitting in traffic on way home listening to an audiobook
- 6:00pm – Prayed Maghrib Salah, spent time with children
- 7:00pm- Had Dinner with the family
- 8:00pm – Read a book then prayed Esha
- 9:00pm – Spent time with my spouse
- 10:00pm – Watched TV for half an hour then slept

## Daily Task Evaluation Form

<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>What I Did</b>	<b>How did I benefit?</b>	<b>Time Spent</b>	<b>Importance</b>
1 August 2015 – 8 am	Answered emails	Got work done, kept my emails from piling up	3 hours	Medium
1 August 2015 – 11 am	Spent time on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter	Needed to relax after answering so many emails	1 hour	Very Low
1 August 2015 – 1 pm	Attended board meeting	Assigned goals and tasks for upcoming week	2 Hours	High
1 August 2015 – 6 pm	Watched television	Relaxed	4 Hours	Very Low
2 August 2015 – 8 am	Answered emails	Got most tiring work done early	1 Hour	Medium
2 August 2015 – 9 am	Read a Self Help Book	Improved Time Management Skills	1 Hour	High
2 August 2015 – 10 am	Drafted proposal on project idea	Finally put my ideas on paper, can now present to board	2 Hours	High

## The Third Step

# Re-evaluating Your Priorities

One of the reasons many people fail to manage their time is because we fail to understand what our priorities should be. Prioritizing our goals and tasks creates the clarity of mind needed to help one know what needs to be fitted into the day or week.

Prioritizing is something essential to the character of the believer; the very system of praying five times a day creates a system of prioritizing Allah and Salah over everything else. This system can be applied to every part of our lives. Be it our personal lives, our careers or our personal growth, in every department some things are more of a priority than others.

Identifying priorities requires some mental work and some typing and reflection, but it is worth the effort in the long run, as the impact it has on our lives is not just better time management but a healthier happier mind and soul.

Many people don't take the time to figure out the priorities in their life, and this leads to a lot of wasted time. Priorities are those things which are important to your happiness and success in both worlds, and therefore are more deserving of our time than other things that clutter our lives.

In the 7 habits of highly effective people, Stephen Covey makes an important distinction between urgent and important. Many people treat urgent tasks as important, but it is not always the case. Very often, the article you are writing or book you are reading is far more important than the phone call, notification or message you just received. Yet many of us choose to prioritize our time and attention towards the urgent issue. Not only does

this waste time but it distracts your concentration, and it takes up even more time trying to get your mind back into what you were working on.

Stephen Covey stated that, "Effective people are not problem-minded, they're opportunity-minded. They feed opportunities and starve problems. They think preventively."<sup>1</sup>

Understanding the difference between urgent and important is crucial, but it cannot be done until we have a clear picture of what are the priorities in our lives. As Muslims, we share certain priorities, but each human has their own life and skills and therefore we will have different priorities in certain departments of life.

#### **Urgent and Important Matrix:**

Urgent, Not Important	Urgent and Important
Not Urgent, Not Important	Not Urgent, Important

This diagram is an example of the urgent/important matrix. Tasks in our lives usually fall into one of four categories, they are either urgent and important, urgent but not important, important but not urgent, or neither urgent nor important. Most people prioritize the urgent tasks but this is not wise, as it means important tasks are neglected.

An example of something that is both urgent and important would be a deadline due this week. The task is important and

1 Stephen Covey, 7 Habits, p. 154

the deadline makes it urgent, the strategy to use for such tasks is to get them done and taken care of straight away.

Things which are important, yet not urgent, are your long term goals. A good example of that is writing this book. There is nothing urgent forcing me to write this book, but I take up time for it every day because it is important to me.

This is where many of us make a mistake, we fail to identify such projects in our lives that are important but lack urgency. The correct way to deal with such tasks is to make time for them daily. Schedule in time for personal development, studying, reading, long term goals, etc. Don't wait until they become urgent, because if they don't, you will never get down to doing them.

Things which are urgent but not important are usually distractions and interruptions like phone calls, messages and people wanting to talk to you. Many people make the mistake of thinking that they need to answer every phone call and respond to every message immediately.

Doing so can take up a lot of time and interrupt the flow of our work, causing much time to be wasted. In a later chapter, we will discuss strategies for handling such tasks. For now understand that answering a phone call and chatting with your friend for an hour is not as important as taking up an hour for personal development.

Finally, we have things which are not important or urgent. These include watching television, playing video games and browsing the internet. These things should never get in the way of our important tasks and should be left for one's recreation time, so that it does not interfere with one's life goals.

Stephen Covey explains this concept very well:

Urgent matters are usually visible. They press on us, they



insist on action. They're often popular with others. They're usually right in front of us. And often they are pleasant, easy, and fun to do. But often they are unimportant.

Importance, on the other hand, has to do with results. If something is important, it contributes to your mission, your values, and your high priority goals.

We react to urgent matters. Important matters that are not urgent require more initiative, more proactivity. We must act to seize opportunity, to make things happen.<sup>1</sup>

The following diagram shows work-related tasks divided according to importance and urgency:

Urgent, Not Important Answer Emails, Answer Phone Calls	Urgent and Important Meet Deadlines for this week, attend meetings
Not urgent, Not Important Catch up on latest office gossip	Important, Not Urgent Write my book, work on projects due next month

Now that we understand the difference between urgent and important. Let us take a look at a few things that should be considered important and a priority in our lives. In general, we can divide our priorities into five categories; religious, career, family, social and personal.

### *Religious Priorities*

This is one area in which the priorities have already been worked out for us, and requires no brainwork except in making time

1 Stephen Covey, 7 Habits, p. 151

for them. Furthermore, every Muslim shares the same religious priorities which include the following:

1. **Praying the five daily Salah on time** – This is crucial as it is the second pillar of Islam, our connection with the Creator, the means through which we stay in control of our desires, learn discipline and concentration and it is the most important act of worship in the life of the believer.
2. **Reciting Qur'an** – Although this is not obligatory, it is highly recommended to recite Qur'an and reflect on its verses every day, even if it is for just ten minutes. Reciting the Qur'an reminds us of our priorities and responsibilities, increases our faith, relaxes our hearts and minds and brings about Allah's blessings.
3. **Studying Islam** – Every Muslim must strive to continuously increase his/her knowledge of Islam. Many people make the excuse that they don't have time to study Islam, but if you are reading a book on time management then you don't qualify for that excuse any longer. Set a syllabus of books, lectures, courses or classes to attend and allocate half an hour to an hour every day for increasing your knowledge of the Deen
4. **Responsibilities towards the Creation of Allah** – these are religious obligations but will be discussed in details in the other categories.

### *Career Priorities*

Our career priorities can be divided into the following areas, and for each individual it will vary in terms of details and level of importance:

1. **Short-term tasks** – these should be done as soon as possible using as little time as needed to get it done and out of the way, while still doing a high quality job
2. **Long-term tasks** – this is an area in which many people fail to manage their time properly. We see a deadline that is two months away and procrastinate until it is too late to do a good job. The key here is to plan in advance.

Identify your long term deadlines, and allocate half an hour daily to working towards it and you will find that you will complete the task way before the deadline and do a better job too. This will also reduce work-related stress and anxiety.

3. **Professional Development** - Due to being surrounded by the urgent issues and distractions, many people become complacent about professional development.

Reality is that for anybody who wants to do well financially, professional development is a priority and therefore we should allocate time daily for it, even if it is just half an hour a day.

Professional development includes reading books and articles or attending seminars that increase your quality and worth as a professional.

The higher you are worth, the better job opportunities you will find and the better salary you will earn. In the long run, this is among the highest priorities of a professional, yet one very few people actually capitalize on.

### *Family Priorities*

These are simple and depending on your family structure, it follows closely to the following formula.

1. **Your spouse** – make time daily for your spouse, the best way to do this is to have a bedtime for your children and

then to spend undivided quality time with your spouse after the children are sleeping.

The exception to the above rule would be in the case of polygamous marriages. In such a case, time management is among the necessary conditions to make such an arrangement work, and as such you need to make time for whichever wife's turn it is for you to be with, yet maintain an equal distribution of time between them across the week.

2. **Your children** – many people ignore their children or distract them with gadgets so that they don't need to spend time with them. Your children are your greatest investment for the future in both worlds, and the best thing you can give them is your time.

Set aside an hour every evening after work to spend quality time with your children and you will experience a huge difference in your relationship with them and how they turn out when they grow up.

3. **Your parents** – If you still live with them, make time for them daily. If you don't, then phone them often and visit them at least once a week. Do not ignore them, because their pleasure can earn you Paradise. Making time for parents should be a priority for every person.
4. **Your siblings** – As we grow and get consumed in our own lives, many siblings drift apart from each other. As Muslims, we must strive to maintain family ties. Doing so can be done simply by messaging each other often, staying connected via social media and occasionally inviting each other over for a family gathering.

### *Social Responsibilities*

Islam emphasizes the importance of contributing to society. Many of us get so distracted with work that we are completely

cut off from our communities. At the very least, we should fulfil the following social obligations:

1. **Dawah** – It is obligatory upon Muslims to share the message of Islam with others. This can be done by posting an Islamic message daily on your social media account, and having a Dawah conversation at least once a week with a neighbour or co-worker. Whatever the case, Dawah should be among our priorities.
2. **Community Service** – Find a way to contribute to your local community that doesn't take up much of your time (unless you have a lot of time to contribute, which is even better). If you think about it, you will find many opportunities in your local community to contribute once a week, and if you can't find any such opportunities, then you should take the initiative to start something.

### *Personal Priorities*

This is an area too many people neglect. We get so caught up in serving others or obsessing over our careers that we forget about our own personal development and mental health. In order to maintain happiness, reduce stress and grow daily, we must make time for the following:

1. **Sleeping and Eating adequately** – Too much sleep and food can dull your senses and make you lazy, while too little food and sleep can make you moody and difficult to work with. Figure out how much sleep you need daily (for most people, it is between 6-8 hours) and schedule that much sleep every day.

As for food, it is not just how much we eat that affects our productivity but also the types of food we eat. A healthy breakfast especially is crucial, so never skip breakfast as you

need it to manage your time and stay alert throughout the day.

2. **Fun and Relaxation** – Some Muslims have a misunderstanding that our religion prohibits having fun and relaxing, and that we are supposed to be busy all the time. This is not the case; there is a lot of room in Islam for Halal fun,<sup>1</sup> and every human needs some form of recreation to recharge and relax. Find something that works for you and schedule in as much fun as you need per day. (Average person needs 1-2 hours of fun every day)
3. **Personal Development** – We all have areas in our lives which can improve and we all have the potential to truly do great things with our lives, yet many of us don't invest enough in ourselves to make this a reality.

I highly recommend scheduling at least half an hour a day for personal development. What is personal development? This book is a good example of it.

Personal development is learning any new skill or knowledge that can improve the quality of your life or personality, like inner peace, stress control, anger management and time management.

I started writing this series of books as a means of providing people with a syllabus in personal development which is grounded in Islamic principles.

If you make time daily to learn something new to improve yourself, you will find yourself growing into a new person every year and you will love the changes you see in yourself.

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1 For more details on this, read my book "Having Fun The Halal Way: Entertainment in Islam"

### *Fitting it all in*

You are probably thinking that these are a lot of priorities and wondering how you can make time for all of it. Reality is that these are a very small list of priorities, and once you get the hang of time management, you will probably be able to squeeze in at least three times that amount of things into your life.

The trick is to make time for each thing and this means to sit down with a pen and paper (or laptop or tablet) and decide which times of the day and which days of the week you will make time for each thing. I guarantee that you will find time for all of the above and still have hours left over in the day for other things like answering email and returning phone calls.

### *Pitfalls to Avoid*

In order to make prioritizing effective, there are certain traps that we need to avoid. These are some of the most common ones:

Failing to differentiate between urgent and important

As discussed earlier, many of us prioritize the urgent over the important. That phone-call is probably not urgent, and that Facebook notification is definitely not urgent. Resist the urge to check your phone every time the light flashes.

I highly recommend keeping your phone on silent or switched off during times when you are concentrating on an important task. You can always schedule in time for social media and returning phone calls so there is no need to take it straight away.

Many of us feel guilty for not answering the phone straight away but there is no need to do so. Most people understand that if the other person didn't pick up the phone, they must be busy, and even if they don't understand, they will get used to it and will learn to call you only during your designated call time.

### *Not focusing on the task at hand*

In order to maximize our efficiency at any task, we must concentrate on it, we must focus, and we must be in the zone. For many of us, concentration is a huge problem. The classical example of this is our Salah. Salah is supposed to train us in concentration and focus, yet for many of us our minds go everywhere else except the Salah itself to the extent that we don't even know what we recited or how many Rakah we prayed.

Concentration is a skill and can only be gained through constant practice and self-discipline. The best place to start is with your Salah. Understanding what you are reciting and why you are praying can go a long way to assist you in praying with concentration. Study the meanings of the Surahs you recite and contemplate on that during the Salah, and over time this will help you gain focus, then you can transfer that focus to other aspects of your life.

The problem with a lack of focus is that your mind is not in your work and as a result, you are less likely to do a good job or complete it quickly. Focus ensures both. Do not worry about what you need to do next, do not think about tomorrow and do not think about yesterday, focus your mind on what you are doing and you will get it done efficiently.

### *Not making time for yourself and your personal development*

I mentioned this already but it is worth repeating. You are your greatest asset. You need to focus on improving yourself and developing yourself, just like you focus on your wealth, career and children. Do not neglect your own needs and development. Make time for them. Not doing so will lead to burnout, low concentration, bad moods, and can even lead to sins.<sup>1</sup>

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1 When people become burned out, their guard is down and they are more likely to turn to sinful things like pornography or drugs to find a temporary release from the pain within them.



Take a five minute break every hour to relax the mind and get ready for the next task. Take a break from work at lunch time to worship Allah and recharge. Take a break at home every evening for some “cave-time” to just chill and reboot. Take a break from work every few months for a family vacation so you can have a complete recharge. Don’t forget to schedule in time every day for growth and learning new skills. You won’t regret it.

### *Focusing on only one area of priority and forgetting the others*

Do not become so obsessed with one area of life that the others suffer. Some people focus so much on their careers, that their families feel neglected. Others focus so much on their children that their spouses feel neglected. Most common are those who focus so much on others that they neglect their own selves.

Even when it comes to religion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned us against focusing only on acts of worship to the extent that we neglect ourselves, our families or our work. He even termed this a form of extremism as per the following narration.

A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) asking how the Prophet (peace be upon him) worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, “Where are we from the Prophet as his past and future sins have been forgiven.”

Then one of them said, “I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever.” The other said, “I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast.” The third said, “I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever.”

Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him) came to them and said, “Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By

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This is why Islam does not allow us to overburden ourselves by praying too much or fasting every single day, as the negative result of such unnatural worship is that when the person becomes exhausted, he is likely to fall into major sins during his slump.

Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. Whoever who does not follow my Sunnah (way), is not from me (not one of my followers)."<sup>1</sup>

So the key to success and happiness is balance. Life is a balancing act between the rights of Allah, the rights of His Creation and the rights of our own souls. The following story summarizes this beautifully:

The Prophet established a bond of brotherhood between Salman and Abu Darda'. Salman paid a visit to Abu ad-Darda and found Um Ad-Darda' dressed in shabby clothes and asked her why she was in that state?" She replied, "Your brother, Abu Ad-Darda is not interested in the luxuries of this world."

In the meantime Abu Ad-Darda came and prepared a meal for him (Salman), and said to him, "(Please) eat for I am fasting." Salman said, "I am not going to eat, unless you eat." So Abu Ad-Darda' ate. When it was night, Abu Ad-Darda' got up (for the night prayer). Salman said (to him), "Sleep," and he slept.

Again Abu-Ad-Darda' got up (for the prayer), and Salman said (to him), "Sleep." When it was the last part of the night, Salman said to him, "Get up now (for the prayer)." So both of them offered their prayers and Salman said to Abu Ad-Darda', "Your Lord has a right on you; and your soul has a right on you; and your family has a right on you; so you should give the rights (of all those who have a right on you).

Later on, Abu Ad-Darda' visited the Prophet and mentioned that to him. The Prophet, said, "Salman has spoken the truth."<sup>2</sup>

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1 SaheehBukhari7:62:1

2 SaheehBukhari 8:73:161

## Action Points:

- Make a list of 20 things which should be a priority in your life.

This list should be comprehensive and include priorities across all five categories. It should include everything from Salah to work goals, family obligations and personal development. Do not leave out anything that you think is important to your life.

- Divide this list into daily and weekly tasks.

Once you have this list, you can now review it and understand what the most important things in your life are. While reviewing it, rearrange the list according to order of priority, then write down next to each item whether it is something you need to focus on daily or weekly.

For example, Salah will be daily priority and at the top of your list. Taking the family out, visiting your parents or a weekly work report will all be listed as weekly priorities i.e. things you need to accomplish once every week.

- Make time daily for the daily priorities and weekly for the weekly ones.

Now organize your weekly planner accordingly. For the daily tasks, slot in time for them every day of the week that they are needed. For the weekly tasks, pick a day of the week and a time and slot it in there. For example: Reciting Surah Al-Kahf on Fridays after Fajr (as reciting Surah Al-Kahf on a Friday is a recommended act of worship)

Something interesting happens when you organize your week like this. You will find that you will have time during the week for all your priorities, and still have time left over for having fun and relaxing. This is because when we make time for the big stuff, we are able to find time for the smaller stuff too, but it is not the case the other way around.

- Make a list of urgent things in your life which are not important and can be minimized.

In his book “The Power of Focus” John Canfield proposes an excellent system for dealing with tasks that are not important. It is called the 4-D Solution,<sup>1</sup> which basically means that if something is not a priority then either:

1. Dump it, if nobody needs to do it anyway.
2. Delegate it, if it is something someone else can do competently.
3. Defer it, if it can be done later and is not important.
4. Do it, if it is urgent and important.

Many of us have piled up tasks that can be dumped or delegated, yet we fail to recognize them and end up wasting valuable time with such activities. Identify such tasks and deal with them accordingly, this will free up time for all the important tasks in your life.

- Practice concentrating on the task at hand for maximum efficiency.

Concentration is a habit, and like any habit it requires a lot of practice. In the next chapter, we will discuss how to let go of old bad habits and build new good habits. This is one habit that is key to time management. When we are focused, things get done faster and with better quality. When we are distracted, we take longer to do things and accomplish less in the process. Learn the art of focus and it will serve you well.

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1 John Canfield, The Power Of Focus, p. 51

## The Fourth Step

# Taking Initiative

*“How many of these dead people have not been able to fulfil their wishes! They might have said, ‘I will do it tomorrow’”<sup>1</sup>*

### ***Procrastination***

Procrastination is the single most common word I hear whenever I bring up the topic of Time Management. “I’m a procrastinator” is the common reply people give me for why they are unable to meet deadlines or organize themselves well. Procrastination is treated like a fact of life, something inherited that can’t be changed or overcome, but this is nothing more than deceiving ourselves.

Procrastination is a habit, and a terrible habit too. However, like all other bad habits it can be overcome with strong will power, commitment and a reason to succeed.

The ability to change a bad habit and replace it with a good one is something every human has the ability to do, all we really need is motivation, and that is what I hope this chapter serves as, motivation to finally let it go.

In order to overcome procrastination, it is important that we understand its roots and causes. There are four main reasons why people procrastinate:

### **1. Lack of goals or vision**

This has already been covered in details in a previous chapter. Goals are our motivation to go the distance and make something of our lives. Goals serve to motivate us, inspire us and give us a reason to face each day with renewed energy.

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<sup>1</sup> IbnJawzi, Time Is Valuable, p. 36

If someone lacks goals, they see no reason to commit to something, to do a good job or even to get it done on time. Life for such people is just a series of obstacles to survive with minimum effort, and so they leave every task for last minute and don't really focus on quality either.

The first step to overcoming procrastination is to have goals to work towards. This will motivate you to organize your life in such a way that these goals are accomplished over time.

## 2. Deception

Shaytaan uses the trick of deception to get people to procrastinate, especially when it comes to righteousness and repentance. The common phrase "I'll repent when I get older," is a classic example of deceptive procrastination. We fool ourselves into thinking we have plenty of time to do something in the future.

In the case of repentance, procrastination is deadly and can cause great harm to one's life in this world and especially in the Afterlife. Yet we apply this same mentality to other aspects of our lives. We think we have plenty of time to write that assignment, submit that report, prepare that class or prepare the meeting notes, until we realize that we don't.

Then the rush is on, with great anxiety, fear and worry we rush to complete something at the last minute and the result is poor shoddy quality work, and a lot of unneeded stress.

The key here is to understand the deception of "later". As Muslims we are taught to never leave anything for the future without saying "inshaa Allah" (If Allah Wills).

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِيْشَيْءٍ اِنِّيْ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا ۗ اِلَّا اَنْ يَّشَاءَ اللّٰهُ

*"And do not say about anything that I will do it tomorrow without saying if Allah wills," (Surah Al-Kahf 18:23-24)*

This statement “inshaa Allah” is meant to be a reminder to us that the future is in Allah’s control so we shouldn’t delay anything that can be done today.

We don’t know what tomorrow has in store for us, so let us lift the veil from our eyes and realize that every moment lost through procrastination is wasted time that you can never get back for the rest of your life. The time for action is now, not tomorrow.

### **3. Perfectionism**

Another cause of procrastination is perfectionism. This is the one thing that caused me to procrastinate in launching my writing career. I always wanted to be an author and to spend my days writing books.

I had many ideas and wrote many outlines, summaries and first chapters. However, I found myself unable to move forward beyond that due to my desire for my writing to be perfect.

I would look at my first draft, full of mistakes and in major need of editing, and think to myself that nobody is going to read this. I would end up putting it away frustrated and moving on to attempt my next project. Perfectionism stood in the way of writing or completing any important project.

One day I finally realized that my chain of thought was ridiculous. I am a human being, and the writings of human beings are never perfect. First drafts, in general, are always a mess. This is why we edit, and hire editors, and even have to publish revised editions.

I realized that if I want to have a career in writing, I need to let go of my desire to be perfect and just write. Write whatever comes to mind, I can always edit, rephrase, delete or expand

upon it later. Once I realized this, the procrastination ended and the writings began to flow.

You too may have a goal that you have been putting off because it isn't perfect. The only way forward is to realize that it never will be perfect. It is a human project and being human means embracing imperfection. It doesn't need to be perfect, it just needs to be your best effort. So let go of your desire for perfection and just focus on doing your best.

John Perry, the author of *The Art of Procrastination*, offers some valuable insight into how to overcome this problem:

You have to get into the habit of forcing yourself to analyse, at the time you accept a task, the costs and benefits of doing a less-than-perfect job. You must ask yourself some questions: How useful would a perfect job be here? How much more useful would it be than a merely adequate job...and you got to ask yourself: What is the probability that I will really do anything like a remotely perfect job on this? And: What difference will it make to me, and to others, whether I do or not?

Often the answer will be that a less-than-perfect job will be just fine, and moreover it's all I am ever going to do anyway. So I give myself permission to do a less-than-perfect job now, rather than waiting until the task is overdue. Which means I may as well do it now. (Or at least start tomorrow)<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. Instant Gratification

The fourth major cause of procrastination is the fact that many of us are programmed mentally to focus on instant gratification. The modern advertising industry thrives on instant gratification. From the time a child is able to understand, he is taught to prefer immediate delights over long-term deals. We grow up with this

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1 John Perry, *The Art of Procrastination*, p. 20



mentality and it has a detrimental effect on every aspect of our lives.

As Muslims, many fall into major sins like fornication because of focusing on instant gratification, instead of the long-term deal of marriage and the responsibilities that come with it. Likewise, people are looking for the instant fix, instant high, get rich quick schemes and even shortcuts to Paradise and Caliphate.

It is this instant gratification mentality that has led to the birth of many extremist movements who look for violent shortcuts to fulfilling their agenda, in our history and recent times as well. This mentality crosses over into our time management too. We may have goals and dreams, but the instant gratification of that next chat, next funny video, and next snack break gets in the way and causes us to procrastinate and often give up on anything that requires long-term effort.

This mentality is completely unislamic and destructive. The state of the ummah today is proof of this; on one hand the violent extremists seek shortcuts to Paradise, and on the other side the average Muslim prefers instantly satisfying his desires over working toward righteousness.

Islamic teachings emphasize the concept of Sabr which translates into many concepts like patience, persistence, self-restraint and consistency. All of these indicate long-term effort and long-term success. The idea of quick methods to success in this world or the Afterlife is a deception, unrealistic and unislamic.

Overcoming this barrier requires a shift in how we think and view the world. We need to understand that success, be it worldly or Afterworldly, can only be attained through long-term hard work. There is no shortcut to fixing the problems of the Middle East, just like there is no shortcut to training your

soul or attaining financial success. If you want something, you need to be ready to commit to it long-term.

I will speak more about the concept of Sabr and its role in time management in a future chapter. The purpose here was to help us understand why we procrastinate. It is only when we understand why we have bad habits that we are able to move on and overcome them.

### *Positive Procrastination*

As anti-procrastination as I may sound, I too procrastinate when it is beneficial. Procrastination, when planned, can actually be a very beneficial time management skill. Positive procrastination means to put things off until the right time to do it.

For example, if I am tired and it is after work hours, I choose to rest and have fun and put off any tasks until the next day. If it is work hours, and I am feeling drained, I take a short break and do something fun before getting back to work.

Some people might think I am procrastinating. After all, why put off until tomorrow what you can do today? My reply to that is, "Because I know I will do a better job at it tomorrow than if I do it now,"

If you have very high goals and aspirations, it is not possible to do everything in one day, one week, one month, one year or even one decade. You will have to plan and prioritise, and that means procrastinating the things you don't need to do yet, in order to make time for the things you need to do now.

Sometimes the thing you need to do later is hard work and what you need to do right now is take a vacation. You shouldn't feel guilty about that, it is in your best interest to take that vacation, recharge your body and mind and return revitalized ready to do

a much better job than you would have done had you not taken the vacation.

This form of procrastination is good, as it is part of prioritizing and planning, and so it should be done without any feeling of guilt. Anything that benefits you in the long run is a good thing, even if that thing is a form of procrastination.

### *Just get started*

So you have a goal, you know you shouldn't procrastinate, you have a plan but you haven't committed to it yet. Something is holding you back. Your mind is filling with excuses. If this is the case then you need to look yourself in the mirror and firmly remind yourself that there is no benefit in delaying anything good.

Every day wasted can never be returned. Why waste this precious resource? What do you have to lose if you get started today on changing your lifestyle and focusing on your goals?

Think about your life in ten or twenty years' time and where you would like to be then, and realize that if you want that, you need to start working towards it today. Delaying is not going to get you anywhere.

Remember that this whole drama is playing out in your mind and you control what you focus on and which thoughts you act on. So put aside the excuses, take control of your time and start changing.

"He who counts tomorrow as part of his life does not recognize death as it should be merited. How many days are to come but he will not be there! How many wishes he has for the days to come that he will not get! If you comprehend the terms of life and the speed with which it flees, then you will detest your desires and wishes," Awn Ibn Abdullah<sup>1</sup>

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1 IbnJawzi, Time Is Valuable, pp. 23-24

### *New Habits – New Beginnings*

Time management is a matter of replacing bad habits with good habits. We all have some habits that waste time or cause delays. Procrastination was focused on because it is the most common, but there are many others like laziness, oversleeping, overeating, and excessive socializing. Interestingly, the classical scholars referred to these things as corrupters of the heart.

Not only do they waste our time but they eat away at our souls and lead us down the path of wastage of other resources too like wealth and knowledge. If you are committed to time management then you need to be ready to change many habits over time.

The key to changing a habit is the following formula:

1. Identify bad habit
2. Identify good habit to replace it
3. Start replacing the bad habit with the good one today
4. Be consistent until the new habit is truly a habit (average 30 days)
5. After that, it gets easier, so you can move on to focus on changing another habit.

Changing habits requires commitment and Sabr. This will only benefit you and you have nothing to lose when replacing a bad habit with a good one.

With regards to time management, here are some key habits that you need to develop:

#### **1. Planning**

Planning is part of the lifestyle of every successful person in history. Just look at how well-planned the Hijrah of the Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was, how well Khalid Ibn Waleed prepared his armies for their battles, and the amount of planning that went into writing the major Islamic works throughout history.

Nothing worthwhile can be accomplished without adequate planning, and this makes planning a crucial habit to develop. Whether it is making a long-term plan to accomplish a goal, planning your year, month, week, day, lecture, meeting or class. This habit goes a long way in helping manage our time and making the best out of our lives.

## 2. Chunking

One of the causes of procrastination is that we look at things as huge piles of work that need to get done. However, any large task can be cut down to digestible chunks. This itself requires some planning, but also requires consistent small effort, yet it is a habit that saves a lot of time.

For example: Just say you need to prepare 100 questions for an exam paper as a school teacher. You have 10 days to prepare it. Many people choose to spend the first few days complaining that the deadline is too short, then a few more days stressing over the deadline, before sitting down the night before to rush and prepare all 100 questions. This system makes no sense at all.

Why not prepare 10 questions a day? That won't take much time, is not stressful at all and you will be completed on time with much better quality questions as you took the time to prepare each question carefully.

This concept can be applied to almost any aspect of our lives. Have an assignment to write? Do it in chunks, divide it into researching one day, data collection another, outlining another

then a few days to write each section and you will complete it in good time without any stress.

Chunking is exactly how I am able to write books. By just setting aside an hour a day to write 5-6 pages, I am able to write entire books in a few months. Chunking is a powerful habit that can help you complete long term goals.

The prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged us to do extra acts of worship in small quality portions too when he (peace be upon him) said:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ سَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا، وَاعْلَمُوا  
أَنَّ لَنْ يُدْخَلَ أَحَدَكُمْ عَمَلُهُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَأَنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ أَدْوَمُهَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِنْ  
قَلَّ

*“Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately and know that your deeds will not make you enter Paradise, and that the most beloved deed to Allah’s is the most regular and constant even though it were little,” (Sahih Al-Bukhari)*

### 3. Allocating Time

One reason many of us procrastinate and never accomplish our goals is that we don’t set aside time for each of our goals. It is a very good habit to set aside time for everything important in your life.

Personally, I set time aside every day for my spouse, my children, my writings, reading, studying, reciting Qur’an, home-schooling my children and every aspect of my job. It is only because I have set a specific time for each task that I have been able to get things done.

This is a simple habit to develop. During the planning phase for each goal, work out how much time you need in a day for

something, what time of the day is ideal for that task and set that time for that task.

#### **4. Focusing**

Focus is a habit, and an important one too. A study of the lives of successful people, past and present, shows that focusing on the task at hand is one of their keys to success. Focus means to be completely into the task at hand and not allowing yourself to be distracted.

This habit requires discipline and certain lifestyle changes like limiting your social media time, but the results are worth it. We are able to get more work done in half an hour with focus than in two hours with distractions.

The beauty of our religion is that we already have the five daily Salah to train us in focus. Yet this is lost on many of us, as we do not pray properly. For many people, the Salah is just a ritual and the heart and soul is not in it. Praying Salah properly is the best way to build focus which can then be transferred to other aspects of our life.

#### **5. Sticking to a schedule**

I have met many people who made schedules or to-Do Lists then forgot about them and continued complaining about not having enough time to get things done. Sticking to a schedule is a habit, and like any other habit, it needs to be built by sticking to it until it becomes a part of who you are.

Sticking to a schedule is a habit that every one of us needs to help us utilize our time properly.

#### **Action Points**

- Figure out what you are procrastinating about in life.

Do this by making a list of things you always wanted to do but kept saying that you will do it someday. Perhaps there is a country you want to visit, a book you want to write, or a job you want to apply for. Whatever it is, add it to the list.

- Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of delaying it and weigh the pros and cons.

For each item on the list, make two columns. One for the benefits of procrastinating regarding that goal, the other for the harms of doing so. Perhaps it is beneficial to procrastinate certain goals. For example, if your goal is to buy an expensive car then to delay that until you can buy it for cash is more beneficial than to buy it now on credit.

But more often, you will find that many of your goals are such that procrastinating just harms them and lessens the chance of ever accomplishing them. Seeing such a list will give you the perspective to realize that you need to take action now and stop delaying. Because if the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, it makes no sense to keep procrastinating.

- Make a plan of action on how you are going to work towards accomplishing that thing and get started.

Utilize the S.M.A.R.T. goal system to break it down into a concrete plan. If your plan is to visit a certain country, figure out how much you will need to save to visit it, how long it will take to save that much money, then make a deadline for saving the money and making that trip. Be as specific as possible and hold yourself accountable for your deadlines. This will motivate you to get started and stop procrastinating.

- Visualize your end result and final goal as vividly as possible.

Visualization is a powerful tool in helping one get motivated to start. Sometimes our goals seem so far away and the road



there seems so long that we just give up and decide to stay where we currently are.

At such times visualization helps you to move forward. Imagine the final product of your goals and how you will enjoy or benefit from it. Try to imagine it in as much details as possible. The more clearly you imagine it, the more motivated you will feel to start working towards it and chasing after it.

In Islam, we already do this regarding Paradise. We imagine Paradise in as much details as possible and this motivates us to stay away from sins do righteous deeds. The same concept can be applied to this world.

For example, when I came up with the idea for this book, I imagined what the final product would look like. I imagined it on my bookshelf, I imagined looking at the cover, flipping through the pages, seeing it on a bestsellers list, and gifting copies of it to family and friends. This detailed visualization motivated me to get started at writing the book. This is the power of visualizing your goals. The next time you feel demotivated, try visualization and see the difference.

## The Fifth Step

# Maintaining Momentum

### *The Habit Trap*

As time management is primarily about forming new habits, the toughest thing in the beginning is maintaining the new habits until they become a part of who you are. Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah made an interesting analysis about the formation of bad habits:

Stand firm against evil thoughts, for if you fail to do so, they will become ideas, if you do not (stop them), they will become desires, so fight against them.

If you do not (stop them), they will become a form of determination and intention, if you do not resist, they will become actions, and if you do not follow them up with their opposite, they will become habits that will be hard to quit.<sup>1</sup>

Bad habits are hard to quit, but not impossible. The key is to have a clear reason to quit and a good habit to replace it with. In terms of time management, this would mean replacing the habit of procrastination with the habits of planning, chunking and working in advance.

However, without determination and commitment, it is difficult to maintain momentum so it is important to be aware of this and take measures to avoid falling back into bad habits.

Here are some methods you can use to stop yourself from falling back into bad habits:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Al-Qayyim, Al-Fawa'id, p. 54

### ***1. Set up daily reminders***

You will need to have a means of reminding yourself daily about the tasks at hand. To do this, you could have a schedule or To-Do List easily visible, like as a poster on the wall of your office or as the background on your PC. You could use post-it notes and stick them wherever you need a reminder. You could use a PDA and set an alarm or even utilize an App that reminds you of the tasks that need taking care of.

These days, there are dozens of methods that can be used to stay on track. It requires some exploration and creativity to discover which methods work for you. The key is to have reminders clearly visible whenever and wherever you need them.

### ***2. Get family and friends to remind you***

This step is a bit of a double-edged sword. If you are surrounded by unorganised people, then asking each other to remind each other of things won't work well as it is likely that they will all forget.

However, if you have a responsible family member or friend who wants to help you organize your life, then that person can play a key role in the beginning phase by assisting you with reminders. You could have such a person remind you whenever it is time to do something important through a message, phone call or whatever methods suit you.

Ideally, you need to train yourself in Self- Discipline and not rely on others for assistance. But if you are not ready for that yet, getting people to help in the early stages is an effective way to train yourself, until it becomes a habit that doesn't require their reminders anymore.

### ***3. Think about and analyse your actions and choices***

One of the greatest qualities that Allah has given humans, that no other creature has, is the ability to think about our own thoughts and analyse them. We can use this skill to our advantage when training ourselves by thinking before we act.

For example: You have decided to dedicate an hour to writing a certain report, but got distracted by a Facebook notification informing you of a funny three minute video. You watch the video and see a link to another funnier five minute video. This cycle can go on and take up an entire hour if you don't catch yourself and think "What am I doing?" "Is this productive?" "Is this wasting my time?"

Training your mind to be disciplined enough to react to such things instantly takes time. Until then, you need to be continuously aware of what you are doing and remind yourself whenever you are going off track. To do this, you need to be completely honest with yourself, and introspect every important decision.

#### ***Dealing with Burnout***

Many people get a bit overzealous when they discover how much they can cram into a day and end up overburdening themselves with too many tasks, projects and responsibilities. This leads over time to burnout. Burnout is a feeling of extreme tiredness and a lack of motivation to get things done, and can come in different ways and at different times.

The key to avoiding burnout is to not take on more than you can handle. To do this, you need to understand your goals and limits and take on only that which is necessary and manageable. This is something I learned the hard way.

Back in 2011, I was juggling too many roles. I was teaching 6 to 8 hours of local Arabic classes, writing books, working a fulltime job of 8 hours a day, 6 days a week, studying for a BAIS,<sup>1</sup> accepting invitations to lecture elsewhere, teaching 10 hours of online classes a week and still making time for family. This situation had made me very moody and irritable, as I had taken on more than my body and brain could handle, and I did not balance it out because I was not taking any time for myself. Eventually, something had to go and I gave up the local Arabic classes and cut down on traveling and lecturing so that I could have more time for my family and myself. It meant less money every month, but mental health and happiness are more important than money, and in the long run they can help me earn more money with better quality work and life.

This takes me to the next point. It is also important to schedule in enough rest and fun daily to keep you motivated and energized. Many people don't think of resting and recreation as necessities of life. They think it is just wasting time, but Allah created us with needs and that includes the need for fun and relaxation. If we ignore these needs, we will get burned out because the human mind can only handle so much before it needs a break.

Do your mind a favour and relax when needed. Take five minute breaks every hour, take an hour to yourself every evening, take a day off every week to just relax (and don't allow yourself to think about work during this time).

Take a vacation once a year and explore this beautiful world that Allah has created. The key is to give your mind a break and let it relax. It can't do this during work time or when busy with family responsibilities. It needs dedicated relaxation time and

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1 Bachelors of Arts in Islamic Studies Degree – Graduated February 2014

there is nothing wrong with taking such time for yourself, so do not feel guilty about it.

Most jobs give people a day off or two every week. Many people don't enjoy these days off because they are so worried about their Monday workload that they can't really relax. This goes back to focusing on the task at hand. In this case, the task is relaxing. When it is time to relax, do not let your mind drift off to stressful thoughts. Think about happy things, be in the moment. Enjoy whatever it is you are doing during your relaxation time and you will feel more motivated to work the next day.

Do this and you will find benefit in it, even if it was just a five minute break. You will feel refreshed and ready to get back to action, and there is nothing wrong with that at all.

My final word of advice on avoiding burnout is to learn to say NO to unnecessary stress and unwanted tasks. Many people feel guilty to decline the requests of others, and feel they are obligated to do everything anybody asks of them.

However, such an attitude is unrealistic and unproductive, and Islam doesn't obligate you to do this.<sup>1</sup> If you learn to say NO to people politely, they will learn to understand that you are busy and will begin to appreciate and understand that.

The key here is politeness with assertiveness and letting people know it isn't personal. Most people will understand, and if they don't, then you did your best and are not responsible for their reaction.

### *The Sabr Factor*

Maintaining momentum means pushing forward with all your tasks regardless of the obstacles you face. This in Arabic is called

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1 Islam does, however, obligate people to obey those who are in a position of authority over them, like parents and bosses. This should be kept in mind when applying this principle.

Sabr and it is a key characteristic of the believer, emphasized multiple times in the Qur'an. Sabr is usually translated as patience but it is actually a very complex word and includes the meanings of patience, persistence, self-control and consistency. Each of these meanings are important when it comes to time management.

### *Patience*

Achieving one's dreams and accomplishing one's goals is not a short-term project. It requires a life-long commitment to a better lifestyle, and that requires patience. If your dreams are great and your goals are high, you will not accomplish them overnight.

You will have to learn to think long term, and focus on long term results. One way to do this is to visualize your goals. Visualization means to think about it as if it has already come true. For example, if you wish to one day own a beautiful home on an island then thinking about and imagining that home on the island every day will give you the boost to chase after that dream, even though you might need five to ten years before it becomes a reality.

Spiritually, we Muslims do the same thing our entire lives with Paradise. We visualize paradise and what our home in Paradise will look like and this motivates us to stay away from anything that can get in our way of getting to Paradise, and we do this our entire lives. This is part of the patience needed to get to paradise and we can transfer the same principle to our worldly lives.

### *Persistence*

On the long path to accomplishing your goals, you will definitely face obstacles and setbacks. This is the nature of the world, and something we must come to terms with if we wish to live happy

and content lives. The world is not perfect, it is a testing ground and so each of us will be tested in a variety of ways.

The key here is to be prepared. Prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for any expected setbacks on the path to accomplishing your goals, prepare to deal with them positively and push on with your goals regardless of what the setback is. Then should such a situation arise, put your plan into action and persist.

There is no goal worth accomplishing which does not face its share of setbacks. A good example of this in recent history was Nelson Mandela's struggle for freedom in South Africa. Mandela spent many years working towards the goal of freedom and equality of all people in his land, and eventually faced a major, yet expected, obstacle – prison.

Yet he persisted in chasing after his goal despite being imprisoned for 27 years and the result of his persistence is now in the history books as one of the greatest moments in South African history.

Your goals may or may not be as grand as Mandela's, but the principle remains the same. If it is a goal worth accomplishing, it is a goal worth struggling for, and no amount of setbacks should stop you from accomplishing it.

### *Self-Control*

Self-Control is another translation for Sabr and usually refers to controlling your urge to sin. Time management too requires great self-control and this is something we all need to train ourselves at. We will have days when we want to waste time, when we want to do things that we will regret later. We must resist such urges as best we can, and focus on our goals.

Self-Control is also very good for your self-confidence. The more in-control you are of your desires, thoughts and actions,



the better you feel about yourself and this in turn increases productivity. Self-Control in time management includes switching off your phone and social media when you need to focus. Work on your projects even when you feel lazy or want to be distracted, and resist the urge to spend your workday on YouTube and comedy websites.

### *Consistency*

Sabr also carries the meaning of Consistency. Consistency is a key to time management. If you set a schedule and don't adhere to it on a daily basis, you will not be able to achieve your goals. Sticking to a schedule or To-Do List is crucial, and this requires consistent effort.

Any long-term or short-term project requires consistent effort. To make small steps daily towards the accomplishment of such goals is the only way forward, but these small steps need to be well-planned and implemented on a consistent basis.

A good example of consistency is Ibn Jawzi. In his life, he wrote over one thousand books. An amazing feat accomplished through consistent effort and strong time management. Imam Dhahabi cites Abdul Latif as saying that Ibn Jawzi did not waste even a bit of his time. He wrote four registers every day despite his responsibilities of compiling, teaching and issuing fatwas. This is the result of consistency in sticking to his daily goals.

### *Summary*

It is inevitable that you will face setbacks and distractions on the path to success. The key is to focus on your goals, make your plans and back up plans, then focus on taking action with all four elements of Sabr. Do this and you will find yourself accomplishing wonders with the Help of Allah.

## Action Points:

- Create a system to stop you from falling back into bad habits.

This may take some trial and error but it is important to set up such a system. Find something that works for you, try an alarm clock, notifications, keeping a diary, asking someone to remind you at certain times to do certain things. Keep experimenting until you find something that works, then stick to it and use it to keep your momentum going even when you are feeling lazy. Research the latest in productivity Apps and Gadgets

With each passing year, new Apps and gadgets are being invented to assist in productivity. It is wise to stay up to date with the latest news regarding such gadgets and Apps, and to find one that works for you. Personally, I enjoy the Samsung Galaxy Note series of phablets as they come with many planning tools which are not found on other phones. Simply do your research and find something that works for you.

- Collect some quotes that motivate you and keep them some place visible so that whenever you look at them it motivates you to keep going.

While writing this book, I had a note posted as the background on my PC stating that if I write a few pages every day, then I will have a book published every few months. This motivational quote pushed me to write, even on days when I was feeling lazy.

A motivational quote could be something religious, or just a statement of a famous person that really inspires you, or even something personal that you write to yourself. Find such quotes and keep them where you can see them and where they can keep you motivated, even on the worst of days.

- Keep a reminder of your goals and why they are important visible somewhere where you can see them and be reminded of them often.

It would be wise to keep a goal diary. It could be a book or a file on your PC in which you record all of your goals and have methods in place to measure how near or far you are to accomplishing these goals. Along with such a list, keep a list of alternative plans to follow. This is because very rarely do our first plans work well. We need to prepare for whatever could go wrong and plan accordingly. So every plan should have with it a Plan B, C, D, E, F, and G to back it up.

Keeping track of your goals in such a book will keep you motivated. There may be days when you feel like accomplishing your goals is not possible. On such days, just open the book and look at your goals, measurements of success, and alternative plans, and you will realize that you are closer to accomplishing your goals than you thought. This will keep you motivated to keep moving forward.

## The Sixth Step

# Avoiding the Distractions

*Time is a precious asset. It must be put to pious use. I try to keep away from people but total indifference is not possible. So, I cut down on my conversation when they are with me and, at the same time, I prepare my writing material and do little odds and bits that have to be done anyway and can be done without distraction while conversing.*

*This kind of work is necessary and does not need extraordinary concentration, either – Ibn Jawzi<sup>1</sup>*

Ibn Jawzi is an excellent role model of someone who would not allow distraction to get in the way of his life goals. Even when engaged in conversations, he chose to keep them as short as possible and multi-task by sharpening pencils or cleaning his library at the same time, so that no time was wasted.

As much as we try to manage our time, we have to prepare for the fact that others do not. That there are people in the world who seem to exist only to waste time, and many such people have invented many gadgets to help us waste our time too.

Such people and their inventions can be a real test to someone struggling to manage his time well. In this section, we will deal with the final major component of time management, dealing with the distractions.

### Common Distractions and their dangers

#### The Email Trap

Schedule specific times of the day for checking emails and social media and for receiving and making phone calls

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1 Time is Valuable, IbnJawzi p. 15

Many of us make the mistake of checking our phones, PDAs or PCs at every notification. We want to read every email as soon as we receive it and this is multiplied if you have multiple inboxes and accounts.

There are two major problems that come from this. The first is that it can literally take up your entire day. Every time you are settling into a task, you receive a notification and feel the need to check it out and often reply to it. If you add up the amount of minutes you spend doing this daily, it is literally hours.

The solution is to regulate your communication work into batches. By setting specific times of the day to check each inbox, you will save time in multiple ways:

1. You will be looking at all of the emails at one time so it does not interrupt other work, and that helps increase the quality of the other work.
2. You can answer each email faster as it is the task you are focused on in the moment
3. If multiple emails require similar responses, you can utilize the copy/paste function to save even more time.

It is equally important to decide what time of the days you check your email. A common mistake we make is to check our email at the start of the day. The problem with this is that it dulls the mind as answering email can be a very boring part of your job, and doing so makes it difficult to revive your mental faculties for more creative work later.

Furthermore, if any email contains information that is going to stress you out or affect your mood, it is now going to affect your entire day.

A recent study shows that many of the most efficient people in the world only check their emails around midday. This allows

them to get all of their most creative and important work done in the early mornings while their minds are still fresh, and all their emails get answered anyway but without affecting the rest of the work load.

So there are essentially two ways to optimize email work:

1. Work in batches.
2. Answer emails late in the day.

### **The Phone Trap**

In addition to emails today are SMSs, phone calls, voicemails, regular mails, social media notifications, etc. You need to resist the urge to take a call or check your phone at every notification. Instead, close all social media sites and switch your phone to silent while working on important projects. Then check your phone and social media for five minutes every hour.

You will notice that the world did not come to an end in those 55 minutes that you were offline. Instead, you are able to get quality work done, and still have enough time to respond to all notifications during those five minute intervals.

You can also use other methods to get around this. If you can afford to, hire a secretary to take your phone calls and give you a list of phone calls that you need to return at the end of the day. You can also activate Voicemail and just check your voicemail every few hours to find out which calls need to be returned.

Furthermore, when taking a call, do not lose track of time or get lost in unnecessary conversations. Inform the other person that you have five minutes to speak (or whatever you feel is right for that specific call) and then you need to get back to work. This will encourage them to summarize what they need to discuss and will save you a lot of valuable time that is wasted in unnecessary discussion.

Personally, I try to limit conversations by informing people that my preferred medium of communication is email and that they are more likely to get a detailed response to an email, than with a phone call. This way, once people understand this, the number of phone calls you receive is reduced and you will deal with more emails instead. This is actually better, as emails are usually to the point and do not include the amount of unnecessary conversation you will have to deal with during a phone call.

### **The Work Environment**

Your working environment is also very important. Many people do not pay enough attention to the things that surround them at work. We often cause our own distractions by allowing things in our workplace which are not productive.

Your work-space should contain just what you need for work and nothing else. Your desk, chair, computer, books, stationary, etc. should all be arranged in a way that saves time, and anything extra should be kept out of sight and as a result, out of mind.

For example, having random magazines lying on your desk is an unnecessary distraction. You may be tempted to browse through them during times when you were supposed to be getting work done. It is the same with videos, entertainment websites, video games or anything else that can distract you from the task at hand.

The solution is to keep it simple. What you need should be accessible, and everything else kept away until such time should you need it or have time for it. This requires being organized.

### **The People Trap**

Another common distraction is people. During high-concentration activities, inform others not to disturb you. Now

if you have your own office, this is simple. Close your office doors and before doing so, inform the others that you will be really busy and cannot be disturbed except in a real emergency. If you have a PA (Personal Assistant) to handle your phone calls, etc. while you are busy, this is even better. If not, keep phone on silent so that people can't disturb you that way.

This can be a bit trickier if you work in an open-plan office with other people. If you have your own cubicle, you can set up some kind of sign that you are busy, and brief others beforehand not to disturb you when you are working. Or if all else fails, wear a pair of earphones while working, not only can it drown out the distracting sounds around you, but for the same reason, people are less likely to disturb someone wearing earphones than someone who is working.

### **The Multi-Tasking Delusion**

When I was a teenager, the concept of multitasking had become quite popular and a symbol of being busy and important. You would find people talking on the phone while typing a report while watching the news and drinking coffee, boasting about how many tasks they can juggle at once.

However, recent studies have proven that multitasking actually slows down productivity and causes sloppy work. When we multi-task, our brains are unable to give any task full attention and as a result, we end up with not much to show for it.

Modern time management experts all agree that focusing on one task at a time gets the task done faster with better quality than multi-tasking. If you are talking to someone, stop everything else you are doing and give them your full attention. If you are writing a book, close everything else and focus on the book and



nothing else. If you are preparing for a meeting, focus on that alone and nothing else.

Do this and you will find yourself accomplishing the task in record time and producing really high quality work too. Then you will still have plenty of time for all the other things you were supposed to do while multi-tasking.

This is not to say there is no place for multi-tasking in time management. Personally, I find multi-tasking beneficial in two situations:

1. When you are doing something mundane which doesn't require any concentration – For example, if you are doing some admin work which doesn't require much concentration, I always find it beneficial to utilize that same time to listen to an audiobook or a lecture while I work. That way, my brain is not bored and is engaged in something productive while my hands and subconscious handle the boring stuff. Of course, doing this requires some training of the mind and you may find yourself making mistakes and unable to concentrate if you are not accustomed to this.
2. When you are in traffic or in a queue – This is a more specific context than above but a similar situation. We all find ourselves in situations in which we have no choice but to stand/sit in a queue or sit in traffic. In such situations, you have two choices. You can get angry and frustrated, which in turn affects your mood, productivity and even fitness. Or you can utilize this time productively.

When I know that I am going to be sitting in a queue for a half hour or longer, I always take a book (or e-book) along to read during this time. In this way, the time is not wasted. Likewise, when stuck in traffic, you can listen to a lecture or audiobook on your radio, make some work phone calls so you will have less

work to do when you reach the office or just take a moment to relax and visualize your goals and dreams, or utilize this time to remember Allah through Dhikr and dua.

Likewise, when one is on board an airplane or train, instead of wasting time worrying and being anxious, prepare in advance and make a plan of action to utilize that time productively. You will find yourself having an edge over everybody else. This is one time when multi-tasking really does pay off.

If the program you need to use is downloading or loading up, utilize that time to get some shorter tasks done. You get the picture; avoid multi-tasking unless its benefits outweigh its harms. If the benefits outweigh the harms, then go for it!

This is one of the keys to time management, to seize the day and make every moment count. To turn every mundane task into an opportunity to accomplish something greater.

### **The Overload Trap**

Many people take on more tasks than they can handle and as a result, they feel overloaded and overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work that they need to do. This happens if we do not keep track of what we can realistically handle, if we are not assertive enough to decline unreasonable requests or if we simply lose track of time and what we need to accomplish in it.

Learning to decline an unreasonable request is very important. There will always be people who want us to do things for them, and as much as Islam teaches us to take care of others and help people with their needs, we need to create balance so that our own needs and goals are met too.

This is where assertiveness comes in. Being assertive means to be firm yet kind in how you deal with people. To be able to say NO without offending the other person. Learning to do this may

take time and error, but it is an important skill to learn in order to keep our own sanity. If we do not learn this skill, we will find ourselves saying yes to everything, and as a result we will end up in over our heads with other people's tasks without any time for our own work, goals and past times. The first step to avoid being overloaded is to simply say no when a task is going to overburden you.

Keep track of your time, and how much you can accomplish in a day. Work out your strong hours and your lazier hours, and figure out between them exactly how much you can accomplish in a day or a week. Doing this helps you to understand your limits and work accordingly.

Once you know your limits, you know when any additional task will be too much for you to handle. This is when you need to be assertive and explain gently exactly why you do not have the time to do that task. Never take on more than you can handle, as this will lead to unnecessary stress, missed deadlines and will upset your time management system.

If a task seems overwhelming because of its size then chunk it. Chunking it means to break it down into workable portions and tackle it one step at a time. This is a great way to get a huge project done with minimum stress.

**Wasting time is worse than death because death separates you from this world whereas wasting time separates you from Allah. - Ibn al Qayyim**

For example, if you want to read an 800 page Tafseer book but feel overwhelmed by its size, break it down into readable portions. If you can read 20 pages a day, it will take you only 40 days to read the entire 800 page book! When you look at it from this angle, what seemed

impossible when looking at it as a whole, looks very easy when you divide it into manageable chunks.

Another way in which people feel overloaded is if they don't schedule in enough rest time. The mind can only do so much before it needs a break. This is why it is advisable to take a five minute break every hour or two to rest the mind. By doing so, your mind stays fresh and you are able to get more done per hour than if you work non-stop without taking any breaks.

### **The Burnout Trap**

Finally, there is the burnout trap. This happens when we work too much for too long without enough fun or rest in between. As much as we would love to utilize all our time to accomplish worthy goals, the mind can only handle so much. After a while, it begins to get tired and you find yourself working at a slower pace and not giving 100% to whatever projects you are involved in.

When this happens, it is time to take a break. In order to avoid burnout, there are different types of breaks that we need to take which include the following:

1. A five minute break from work every hour or two
2. An hour of break to relax around lunch time
3. An hour or two of fun every evening
4. A day off every week in which you do not think about work
5. A vacation once or twice a year away from your usual routine

Do not feel guilty about having fun, if it is Halal. Allah has created the good things of this world to be enjoyed by us and we need fun in order to recharge our minds and do our work properly. Without it, the mind is dulled and we lose focus.

However, when having fun we should not go overboard and get so caught up in fun that we end up mismanaging our time by devoting too much time to entertainment. Balance is required, and balance means to prioritize important things over fun.

During such breaks, do something that you genuinely find enjoyable, whether it is taking a walk, watching something halal, reading a book, exercising or even just closing your eyes and having a power nap. Do not think about work at all and just relax. You will find yourself energized and ready to work better than you imagined.

Many people don't give themselves the luxury of a vacation. They feel guilty to spend money on a holiday away from home and feel it is better to utilize such time for work and projects. While this is a commendable attitude, most people need vacations in order to completely recover from the stresses of daily life.

A vacation doesn't have to be expensive, and there are many Halal vacation destinations around the world. I personally prefer outdoor natural places like mountains, nature reserves and islands where one can get back in touch with nature, and through nature connect with the Creator and feel a spiritual recharge as well.

I also find Umrah trips especially beneficial when I need a recharge but these are expensive and so we cannot go as often as we would like. The peaceful spiritual atmosphere of Makkah and Madinah have a miraculous effect on one's faith, spirituality, inner peace and attitude. If you haven't been for Umrah and can afford it, make the trip. It is life changing and a trip you will never forget.

### **Action Points**

- Identify your peak concentration time and schedule your most taxing projects and tasks for that time.

Every person has a time of the day when they are at their best and can focus better and get more done. Using this time for mundane tasks is a waste of resources. Mundane tasks can be done at any time. Rather capitalize on this time to get your best work done and to get your most mentally taxing tasks taken care of. Doing this will ensure that higher quality work is done with greater focus in less time.

For most people, their peak concentration time is either late at night or early in the morning. For me, it is the late afternoon when all other tasks are done. Every person is different. Identify what works best for you and schedule your high-concentration tasks for that time.

- Identify your low concentration time and schedule your least taxing tasks for that time.

Low concentration time is the time of the day when you are just too tired to get anything done or to focus. It could be the late afternoon just before home time, the hour before your lunch break, or early in the morning when still drowsy. Again, each person is different. Identify your low concentration time and use it for such tasks that do not require focus like checking email, deleting unwanted files, organizing your office, or basic administration tasks. These tasks do not require you to be at your best so why waste your best time on them. Utilize your best time for more important work and do these tasks when you don't have the energy for better tasks.

- Establish an environment for concentration and remove all distractions from that environment.

Your workspace should be free of any unwanted distractions, as should your PC. Take an hour or a day to just sit and

evaluate everything you have in your work environment and identify whether it belongs there or not. If it doesn't belong there and will distract you, move it elsewhere. If it belongs there, then file it somewhere where you can access it whenever you need it, but in a place where it isn't distracting you when you don't need it. A productive neat environment goes a long way towards getting things done.

- Work out a personal system for dealing with burnout on a daily, weekly and annual level

This would mean identifying what you need to do during your five minute breaks. Some people utilize this time for taking a power nap, others stretch their legs and exercise, and some people watch a short video clip or read a fun article. Find what works for you and utilize your five minute break to do just that.

Likewise, schedule in downtime after work for spending time with your children and spouse, as well as a weekly day off dedicating part of it to yourself and part of it to your family and friends.

Do not forget to plan in advance any holidays as you will need to save money and schedule leave from work to take it. Try to plan your vacations for the times of the year when you really need a break and are most likely to deal with burnout.

Identify which tasks you can delegate to others and remember that tasks which can be delegated are of two types:

A) Those that anybody can do so why do them yourself? These may include making copies, printing documents, putting up flyers, setting up a hall, etc.

B) Those requiring skills of experts in fields you don't specialize in. If you don't delegate these, you will end up

taking more time and producing poorer quality work, and probably making a mess of it in the process.

Identify any tasks that can fit into these two categories and delegate them to someone who can do it for you, be it a personal assistant, a family member or a volunteer.

- Identify tasks that don't need to be done at all and dispose of them.

Sometimes tasks that pile up in our to-do list really have no place there, or which are not relevant to our lives anymore. As a result, our to-do list looks longer than it needs to be. Go through your lists, documents and tasks and find anything that really doesn't need to be done at all and dispose of it to make time for the things that need to be done.



## Time Management Tips

In the previous sections, we have looked at some of the major principles governing time management from an Islamic Perspective. In this chapter, I wish to discuss a few important tips which did not fit into any of those categories. The tips are grouped according to subtopic, and some tips may be repeated in multiple sections, due to their relevance to each topic.

### The Two-Minute Rule

A popular and effective Time Management Tip is called the Two Minute Rule, which basically means that if you have any task to complete which will take less than two minutes to complete, then do it immediately and get it out of the way.

However, one should be careful not to apply this rule during times when you are supposed to be concentrating on other projects as it will distract you from that work and dull your concentration. Ideally, the two minute principle should be used in batches like when replying to emails or returning phone calls. Or alternatively, during times when you have extra time on your hand between major tasks.

The benefit of this principle is that it gets the short tasks out of the way, so they are off your mind and done with. This frees up your mind to concentrate better on the bigger tasks.

### Organizing Tips

A general rule of time management is that someone whose work station is disorganized usually has poor time management, while someone whose work station is well organized is usually quite efficient and productive. This is actually common sense as an organized work station means that you know where

everything is and where it stays and can access it as soon as you need it. While someone with a messy desk often spends too much time looking for a pen, or looking for that document he needed and wastes hours of his life doing so.

A few key tips for staying organized:

1. Keep your desk clear of everything except what you are using right now.
2. Have all your documents filed efficiently and in a systematic order so that you can access them whenever you need them.
3. Always keep a good stock of all necessary stationary and keep them in a specific place so you know where it is when you need it.
4. Keep everything you need for work stored at your work station. It really wastes time if you are working at your office and realize you need a document that you stored in a cupboard at home.
5. Organize your computer in a systematic fashion too. Avoid cluttering your desktop and have all files stored in folders in which they are easily accessible and traceable.

For example, my desktop just has three folders on it: Work, Videos and Personal Projects. Each folder has many sub-folders which contain further sub-folders. This makes it very easy for me to search for something I need.

If I need a document I used in 2012 at work, I just need to open the Work Folder, then the Archive folder, then the 2012 folder and it will be there. This system has saved me a lot of time and is very efficient. An additional benefit of this is that your mind is more relaxed when you see a clear desktop, and your computer boots faster too. A cluttered desktop indicates a cluttered mind, while a neat desktop indicates an organized mind.

## Shortcut Tips

Time-Management is all about shortcuts and in the modern world, there is no end to the amount of shortcuts you can find to get work done. With some creative thinking, I am sure you can find many shortcuts for getting your work done faster while maintaining high quality.

There are two rules that you should abide by when implementing a shortcut if you want it to be constructive:

1. It should be Halal.
2. It should not compromise the quality of the product.

Here are a list of shortcuts that have made my work very efficient:

### 1. Shortcut Keys on the PC

Take out some time to learn every shortcut key on your PC. Each of these may save you approximately 5-10 seconds per move, but when you look at them together, you are actually saving yourself hours every day.

For example, many people copy and paste using the drop down menu. They highlight a text, right-click the screen, choose copy, then open to the next location, press right click again, scroll down the menu again and press paste. This can be shortened by pressing CTRL + C when highlighting a text to copy it, and CTRL + V to paste. This small step alone can save you hours of time that are wasted in navigating the drop down menu, and there are many other similar shortcut keys to learn.

I would recommend attending a crash course in computers to learn as many such shortcut keys as you can.

## **2. Re-using old material**

As a rule, I do not delete anything that I write or prepare. Be it lecture notes, a PowerPoint Presentation or even just my private thoughts. I keep it all saved so that I can recycle it whenever needed.

For example, as a university teacher I tend to teach the same course multiple times over a few semesters. The first time I teach a course, I put in extra time and effort into preparing a high quality lesson with notes and PowerPoint, and to research it thoroughly. I then save those notes and PowerPoint and use the same ones every semester after with just some editing and improvement. This saves me hours of preparation time in future semesters giving me more time for research and development.

## **3. Learning the shortest route and avoiding traffic**

Sometimes we get so accustomed to one route to a destination that we develop a fear of trying new routes. I remember a few years ago, I was bored and taking a drive so I decided to try a road that I never drove down before. I discovered that the road was actually a shortcut to one of my favourite malls and saved me 10 minutes of time getting there. Ever since then, I have made it an effort to try and learn the shortest route possible to any destination as this is a real time saver.

Additionally, you will want to avoid traffic unless you are one of those people who utilize your time in traffic constructively. This can be done by leaving earlier for work than others, and going home a little later. Arriving early and leaving late from work is also a good way to show your boss that you are hardworking and might even end up leading to a promotion.

#### **4. Choose email over phone calls**

This is a personal preference of mine. I prefer email as my primary means of communication simply because it saves time. With phone calls, people tend to go on in too much details on irrelevant points, ask unnecessary questions and worst of all try to phone at odd times.

As a rule, I rarely answer my phone unless it is family or important. I keep calls as short as possible and usually advise people to email me instead. Emails tend to be direct, free of useless banter and you can reply at a time of your choosing.

Alternatively, if you prefer phone calls you can still save time by utilizing voicemail and returning all phone calls at a set time. You can also give people a time limit. For example, you can tell them you only have five minutes to speak and this will make them get straight to the point and skip the banter.

Whichever way you choose, prolonged phone calls during work hours can be a major time waster, so finding a more efficient means of communication is critical.

#### **5. Delegate as much as you can**

Many people feel overwhelmed because they take on more than they can handle. It is not easy or productive to try and do everything yourself, and there isn't one person who has every skill needed for a task to succeed.

A huge time saver is to delegate tasks to others, there are usually two types of tasks that should be delegated:

1. If it is outside your field of expertise, delegate it to an expert in that field. Not only will this save time but it will ensure better quality work. Of course, this requires the humility to admit that you are not an expert in every field.

2. If it is something simple that you can train someone else to do for you, then train someone and delegate the task to that person.

In 2013, I decided to launch my personal website [www.abumuawiyah.com](http://www.abumuawiyah.com) but I had no skills in setting up a website. However, Allah has blessed me with amazing friends and students. A student who runs a website design company offered to host and set up the website for free. As he and his team worked on setting up the website, another friend volunteered to design my logo for the website, and yet another volunteered to edit my audio lectures for uploading.

In the end, my website was put together in a few short weeks by experts who volunteered their time to help me. You can visit the [link](http://www.abumuawiyah.com) to see the final result and when you do, think about the fact that it was all put together by volunteers and I didn't have to do much beyond the planning and delegating.

Not everybody is able to get volunteer delegates, but if something saves us time then it is worth spending money on hiring someone to do it for you. This frees up time to focus on other tasks and, in this way more work gets done in less time. In this sense, it is worth your time to hire a PA (Personal Assistant) or VA (Virtual Assistant) to handle anything that you don't need to do yourself.

Today, I have delegated many tasks to volunteers. I have volunteers who run my Facebook Page, Twitter Account, respond to common emails, edit my books and articles, and edit my audio files among other tasks. This gives me more time to write books, teach, research, read and spend quality time with my family.

Delegation is a huge time saver and a way to get more done in a day than others think is humanly possible.

## **6. Automate whatever you can**

In this age of technology, we don't even need to delegate all tasks to human beings. We can actually automate a lot of our tasks these days. Take some time to explore the variety of Apps and Programs currently available that can perform some of your tasks for you.

For example: If you receive a certain type of email often and it requires a standard response. You can actually schedule automated responses for such emails saving you the time of repeating yourself every time someone emails you on that topic.

A good example of this is an institute I worked at, where the IT team automated the attendance registry for the online classes. Initially, I would have to go through each class and mark down every student who attended. Since the IT team automated it, I don't have to do a thing. Students just show up and the computer automatically logs their attendance and adds it to the registry, saving the teachers from hours of work.

## **7. Speed-Reading and Speed-Listening**

Not every book needs to be read slowly and carefully, and not every one hour lecture should take a full hour to listen to. Learning to speed read is a great skill that can save you a lot of time and help you read many books in record time.

With modern technology, you can speed-listen too. Some media players like VLC player offer the feature to play a video or audio at double speed. Our ears and minds can actually listen to lectures at double speed and catch it all, because we are accustomed to people speaking faster in our daily interactions than they do in lectures. This is a huge time saver and you can

actually listen to two hours' worth of lectures in one hour using this method!<sup>1</sup>

## **8. Dump what you can**

Not every project that comes your way needs to be done. Very often, we fill up our workdays with things that benefit nobody so that we can feel busy while in reality we are just wasting time. The key here is to think about the end-result. If you are working on a task which absolutely nobody is going to benefit from and which is just meant to fill up time, then eliminate that task.

If you are working for someone else, clarify the purpose of any task you are working on, and if you both agree that it serves no purpose then get their approval to dump it and replace it with something beneficial to the company.

## **Discipline Tips**

As mentioned throughout this book, time management requires firm discipline. Here are some tips that assist me in maintaining the discipline to stick to a schedule:

### **1. Keep reminders for every important thing.**

Whether you have a notebook, Tablet, Smartphone, Diary or Desktop Planner, utilize it to store reminders for everything that is important. Make it a habit to write down anything that is important in a place where you can remember it.

Whether it is a reminder to call your mechanic and make an appointment to tune up your car, or a reminder that you have a class to teach at a certain time, or a reminder to pay the bills on a certain date. Whatever it is, set a written reminder and you will be less likely to forget or overlook it.

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<sup>1</sup> Some books and lectures deserve slowing down in order to digest them, but most don't.



## **2. Don't mix creative and admin work.**

A lot of modern day work involves thinking, creativity and planning. Many people make the mistake of trying to do this while doing admin work at the same time. This goes back to our point on multitasking; it is not productive to try and do both at the same time. Creativity requires the brain to function in one manner, while admin work requires it to function quite differently. Trying to do both at the same time is not productive and can even cause a headache.

Schedule your creative tasks for separate times from your admin work. This way your mind can function in one manner and focus on the task at hand. If you are more creative in the mornings, then make that your creative time and leave your admin work for the afternoon. Likewise, if you are more creative in the afternoon or evening, schedule your time accordingly.

The point is to allow your mind to focus on the task at hand and in that manner, you will get more done faster.

## **3. Subconscious Level Thinking**

The human mind operates on two levels. There is the conscious thinking which is what you are focusing on at the moment. However, while you are focusing on something, there are many things going on in the back of your mind that you are not aware of, this is known as the subconscious or unconscious part of the brain.

Recent studies have shown that many of our best ideas are stimulated in the subconscious level of the mind, as it never rests, even when we are sleeping. This is where the idea of "sleeping on it" comes from. Very often when someone has a really complex problem to solve, they choose to sleep on it or do something fun. While doing so, the subconscious level of

the mind continues working on the problem in a more relaxed manner and the solution is soon formed.

The next time you have a complex problem to solve or are searching for a great creative idea, instead of wasting time stressing over it, sleep on it and you might find the solution you were looking for.

Perhaps this is why some of our best ideas come to us while we are praying Salah, as we are relaxed and focused on Allah so our minds are also relaxed and our subconscious can dig deeper and discover new ideas. (That's how the idea for this book came to me.)

#### **4. Rewarding yourself**

In this world, not many people are going to stand in your corner, support your every idea and compliment your efforts. You often need to be your own cheerleader as you need motivation and encouragement to push on through difficult times.

One way to keep yourself motivated is to reward yourself for each small and large victory. This will give you a boost to continue working harder and succeeding. Small victories can be rewarded with small things, for examples you can reward yourself with a ten minute break and a cup of coffee for getting that report done in record time.

Bigger victories can be rewarded with a bigger reward. For example, a successful huge sale or completion of an important course can be rewarded with a night out for the family to your favourite Halal restaurant.

The point is to take care of yourself, and this will keep you motivated to keep rising to higher levels with each little victory.

## **5. Set a time limit for each task**

Most of us can't keep working at one task all day. We need breaks and limits. Furthermore, setting a time limit forces you to work faster and get things done in record time. If a task usually takes you two hours to do, set a time limit to do it in one hour, you will be surprised by the fact that it will probably take you 45 minutes to do it with such a time limit. The general rule is to set a time limit to do a task in half the time it usually takes you to do it.

This is because when we have tight deadlines, our mind goes into overdrive in finding ways to get things done faster. Setting time limits and deadlines for all your tasks is a great way to discipline yourself to work faster and better.

## **6. Set a dollar value for your time**

Time is money. This is a fact. Every moment wasted with mundane activities is a moment wasted that you can never get back. Many people overcome this by working out how much each minute of their day is worth in terms of dollars.

If you earn \$2000 a month, each work day is worth \$80 so each hour is worth \$8. If you waste an hour, you have wasted \$8. Of course, if you maximize that time, you can actually increase the value of your time, because productive people tend to earn more than unproductive people. And the more your time is worth, the less likely you are to waste it because you know what it is worth.

## **7. Avoid Perfectionism**

I always wanted to be an author. I knew that it was what I was best at, but for many years I held back because I was not happy that my writings are not perfect. It was only when I let go of my

desire for perfection that I was finally able to let my ideas flow and the writing happened.

Too often, we focus on perfection and end up wasting time trying to improve already high quality work to unrealistic standards. This does not mean we should do shoddy work. No, our focus should be on high quality results, not perfect results. Nothing in this world is perfect so striving for perfection is a self-defeating goal and will always leave you frustrated and miserable.

Focus on doing your best, you can always improve and learn from mistakes, but getting things done is far more important than worrying about the impossible.

## **8. Identify your peak times**

Every person has a time of the day when he or she is at their best. Identify your peak time (for most people, it is early morning or late at night) and schedule your most important projects for that time. This will help you give maximum attention to that task and produce the highest quality product.

## **9. Focus on your most important task**

Ask yourself each day what is the most important thing I need to get done today, then get that done early and give it most of your attention. Do this and you will find time for everything else as well, and you will feel better for having completed the most important tasks early.

## **Health Tips**

You cannot be productive if you are unhealthy and unfit. A lack of focus on any aspect of health, be it physical, mental or spiritual will have an impact on your productivity and affect your work.

With this is mind, it is necessary to take care of ourselves if we wish to remain productive.

As Muslims, we believe that our bodies have been entrusted to us by Allah and we are obligated to take care of ourselves. These tips will help you stay mentally, spiritually and physically fit enough to stay productive:

### **1. Recite Qur'an daily**

The Qur'an is our connection with Allah and the best source of motivation and inspiration. Make time daily for reciting Qur'an with reflection and understanding and you will experience a steady level of spiritual health and inner peace, which fuels productivity.

### **2. Start the day with Fajr on time**

Fajr time is beautiful and blessed. The world is silent and still, and you can feel Barakah around you. Praying Fajr on time starts your day on the right note, plus the time after Fajr is blessed. You will find that you will get more done in a day when your Salah is performed on time with concentration and understanding. This is one of the best ways to get the Barakah in your time.

### **3. Get enough sleep**

Each human is unique in this area. The average person needs between six to eight hours sleep to stay productive. Less than that makes them groggy while more than that makes them lazy. However, there are some people who don't need that much time to sleep. Each person is different and knows their own needs and limits. (And if you don't know, you should figure it out)

Work out how much sleep you need daily and make sure you get it by going to bed early each day. You will feel better, more alert and productive and will definitely get more done each day.

#### **4. Eat moderately**

The Hadiths on this topic are very clear. Overeating is one of the major causes of laziness, so to stay productive we must eat moderately. Have a healthy breakfast and moderate lunch and dinner, and avoid too many sugary snacks between meals. It is also important to drink plenty of water. This may sound simple but it goes a long way to maintaining alertness and productivity on a daily basis.

#### **5. Take a break whenever you need one**

Your mind and body know when they can't go on. Don't overexert yourself. You will produce poor quality work and take more time to do it if you are groggy or tired. Take a five minute break every hour to stretch your legs, drink some water, or do some breathing exercises. Have a power nap for ten or twenty minutes once a day if you feel the need for it, and avoid working after hours if you can. Your body and mind need a break to function at their best.

#### **6. Relax and don't stress**

A lot of our health is based on how we feel about ourselves. Stress and anxiety are major causes of illness and laziness. I am writing a separate book on Stress Management, inshaa Allah. However, to summarize the main message, stressing about anything doesn't solve the problem, it just creates additional problems. Instead of stressing about it, be solution focused and learn to accept that this world isn't perfect and everybody has bad days. Don't allow a hiccup in your plans to derail your

productivity, as the time and energy wasted stressing and worrying cannot be regained.

## **7. Recognize your mood and work accordingly**

Everybody has bad days and good days, times of the day when we are energetic and times of the day when we are tired. On your good days, maximize that energy and get more done than usual so you can afford to do less work on bad days. Likewise, during the day get your most creative work done during energetic times and leave the easy and boring work for times when your energy is low. This way you maintain a balance and keep yourself from burning out.

## **8. Maintain healthy relationships with loved ones**

A problem in your family life can make it very difficult to concentrate at work and be productive. We all need happy fulfilling relationships to function at our best. If you have a spouse or children, make sure that you spend quality time with them, and use the positive emotions you experience during these times to fuel you to do your best at other times. A happy family life leads to productivity in the workplace, so do your best to maintain a happy home.

## **Barakah Tips**

Finally, a book entitled TIME MANAGEMENT should end with a summarized list of ways to manage our time in the best way, so here are some primary methods for that:

### **1. Establish the Five Daily Prayers**

If you are not praying five times a day, you cannot expect Barakah in your time. Praying five times a day is the primary act of worship required from us as servants of Allah, and if we

neglect this duty, we should not expect Barakah in other aspects of our lives.

## **2. Pray for Barakah**

If you want Barakah in your time, then just like any other gift from Allah, you need to ask Allah for it. Ask Allah daily in your private duas for Barakah in your time, effort, wealth, health and efforts. A sincere dua does not go unheard.

## **3. Utilize the early morning hours**

The last one third of the night and the early hours of the morning are times which are full of Barakah. Try it out one day, wake up for Tahajjud and then work on some of your most important tasks after Tahajjud and Fajr. You will notice that you will be able to get more done in less time due to the blessings that Allah has placed in this time.

## **4. Keep your earnings, spending, food and goals Halal**

For any prayer to be answered, it must be made by someone who has not tainted his wealth or food with that which Allah has prohibited. Strive your best to earn Halal wealth, spend it properly, purchase only Halal food, and set noble goals. If you do so, you will earn Barakah from Allah.

## **5. Give a lot of Charity (Sadaqah)**

Many of us know that the way to increase the Barakah in our wealth is to spend it on others. The same applies to our time. Volunteer your time for noble causes and you will find yourself with extra time to chase your goals. As the more wealth you give others, the more Allah gives you. Likewise, the more time you spend on others, the more Allah blesses your time.



## 6. Be grateful for what you have

Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ<sup>ط</sup> وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

*“And remember when your Lord proclaimed, if you are grateful, I shall give you more, and if you are ungrateful then my punishment is severe,”<sup>1</sup>*

This means that increase in anything is linked to how grateful we are to Allah for granting us that thing. So if we want Barakah in our time, we must be grateful to Allah for the time He has already blessed us with, instead of complaining about what we don't have. The formula is simple and applies to any area of life: gratitude leads to increase, and complaints lead to decrease.

### Keep aiming Higher

My final advice is to never slow down and give up on being the best you can be, whether it is in terms of your Imaan, career or family life. Keep aiming higher to be better than you currently are. Do not allow past successes to make you complacent.

The past is in the past, use it as a springboard for the future and focus on the present. Keep moving forward in every aspect of your life and you will find yourself accomplishing more than you ever imagined.

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1 Surah Ibrahim 14:07

## Final Word: Keep Growing

Alhamdulillah, you have completed reading this book, now comes the real challenge to put it all into practice and transform your life into a more productive fulfilling existence.

Time Management makes up just one aspect of personal growth and development. There is much to learn and explore as we continue on our journey to become the best of Creation.

Allah has created humans with almost unlimited potential to grow and succeed in both worlds. When you study the history of this world, you wonder at the amazing things that people accomplished.

The truth is that these people are the same as you and I, they were human beings with the same natural born capabilities, yet they never wasted their time and continued working on improving themselves until they became the best they could be. We too have the potential to do the same.

Many of us focus a lot of our resources in investing in property and companies and other financial assets. Yet, one of the best things you can invest in is yourself.

Allocate some of your time, money and resources to developing yourself by learning new skills on a constant basis. In the long run, this will prove to be one of your greatest assets.

As you close this book, I hope you take it as a step on a life long journey of continuous improvement. Imagine you had to read just one important book every month of your life, imagine the changes you will experience over time.

As believers, we must strive for continuous self-improvement as none of us are perfect. It is true that no human can attain perfection, but Allah looks at our effort and rewards accordingly.

So now it is up to you to focus on your journey and keep climbing and growing. It is a beautiful journey and path, and one that nobody regrets embarking on.

I end by asking Allah to accept this writing from us, use it as a means of guidance for people, add it to our scales of good deeds on the Last Day, and I ask Allah to help each of us utilize our full potential to serve this ummah and make this world a better place.

Jazakallah Khair for your time, and I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it.

*Was Salaam*

*Your Brother*

*Abu Muawiyah Ismail Kamdar*



# Templates

Day/Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-9:00					
9:00-10:00					
10:00-11:00					
11:00-12:00					
12:00-13:00					
13:00-14:00					
14:00-15:00					
15:00-16:00					
16:00-17:00					

The Seven Day Planner



# Weekly To-Do List

Weekly Planner  
August Week 1

MON	
TUES	
WED	
THU	
FRI	
SAT	
SUN	





## Appendix I

# Time Management for Bad Days

You know those happy days when everything is going your way, the sun is shining, the birds are chirping and you are just really energized, excited and able to get things done? Yeah, well this article isn't about those days.

Time Management can be rather easy on a good day once you have learned the basics and established good habits. The real test though is remaining productive on days when things just aren't going your way, and that's what this article is about.

Here are five things I recommend doing to remain productive on days when you just want to close the curtains and curl up in bed (or rip up your manuscripts and howl at the moon):

### **1. Figure out the most important tasks for the day and just get them done**

If you woke up on the wrong side of the bed, it is highly unlikely that you are going to conquer the moon today while writing a best-selling novel, restoring peace between two nations and saving some innocent bystanders in the process. (Although it is all still possible even on the gloomiest of days)

Most likely, if you are in a bad mood, you are going to get less done than usual so best make sure that the important stuff gets done first. Look at your daily To-Do List, identify the three most important tasks that will make you feel accomplished by the time the sun sets, and get those three things done. Even if you are unable to accomplish anything else that day, this alone will give you a reason to relax and enjoy your evening coffee with a clear conscious.

## **2. Schedule some Downtime**

If your body is feeling agitated, irritated and simply off, it could be an internal sign that you need to relax and recharge. Do yourself a favor and schedule in some downtime, make time for yourself. Read a fun book, have coffee with your funniest friend at your favourite hangout, sit back with your legs up on the table and close your eyes. Don't feel guilty to take time to relax, you are not wasting time or being unproductive, you are just recharging your energy so that you can do much more in less time.

## **3. Downsize your work load**

Besides your three main tasks, in order to get things done when down with the Monday blues, try halving your workload. For example, if you usually write 8 pages a day, commit to writing just 4 pages on such a day. If you usually make 10 sales a day, commit to just getting 5 sales done. Many of us just feel like doing nothing and end up wasting the entire day. Committing to doing less actually helps you get things done on such days. Don't feel guilty about setting a smaller goal for such a day, it's better than getting nothing done because you were in a bad mood.

## **4. Avoid Negative people like a plague**

If you have an appointment with someone who is difficult to deal with, you may want to consider rescheduling. On days when you are ready to snap, you really don't want to be walking into a hostile situation and end up losing it. On such days, it's better to just close your office door and work alone...for the safety of others, of course.

## 5. Overdose on sources of inspiration

If you are like me, you probably have a PC loaded with inspirational quotes, videos, audios and pictures. Well if you are having a bad day, you will probably need the entire collection. Read your quotes collection, watch the inspiration videos, look at the pictures of your goals and pump yourself up to get things done, no matter how bad the day gets. Personally, I choose to recite extra Qur'an on days when I am feeling down and reflect on the meanings, as it calms me down and gives me hope. You should try it too.

Do all of this and I'm sure your irritating days can remain productive. Maybe not as productive as usual, but productive enough.

\*Written on one of those days.

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<http://islamicselfhelp.com/2015/05/timemanagement-bad-days/>

on 18 May 2015)

## Appendix II

# Time Management For Ramadan

The countdown has begun and we have less than one and half months left until the greatest month of the year, Ramadan! I'm sure by now most of you are stock-piling the goodies for iftar and downloading as many resources as possible for Ramadan preparation but the question remains "How can I manage my time well enough to get it all done?"

That is what this series of articles is going to assist you with, insha Allah. Without any further intro, let's jump right into our Time Management Tips for Ramadan:

### 1. Plan in Advance

Time Management is divided between planning and application. Without adequate planning, there isn't anything much to apply and the result is another Ramadan that just flies by. Don't allow this to be such a Ramadan. You have a few weeks to plan this properly, so let's start working on our plans now.

To plan for Ramadan, we need to be clear regarding the goals (Maqasid) of Ramadan. As per the Qur'an, we know that fasting has been obligated on us to increase our Taqwa (God-consciousness) and that the Qur'an was revealed in Ramadan as a guidance for mankind. (See Surah Al-Baqarah, verses 183 and 185)

This means our overall objective of Ramadan should be an increase in Guidance and Taqwa. Every goal you formulate must work towards these two ends. With this end goal being clear, let's move on to the next step.

## 2. Calculate how much Ibaadah time you will have daily

Ideally, we all want to spend Ramadan performing acts of worship 24/7, but this isn't realistic and most of us have other obligations that we need to take care of as well. As the zeal dies down towards the middle of Ramadan, many people get caught up in their work, family responsibilities and rest, resulting in less Ibadah (acts of worship) being done than initially desired.

This can be avoided by working out in advance how much time you will have daily for Ibadah, then setting goals to get that much Ibadah done minimum daily. The formula is simple: 24 Hours – (Sleep time, Work Time, Family Responsibility) = Ibadah time.

For example, if you need six hours sleep daily, work an eight hour job every day and spent at least an hour helping the children with their homework, add in time for eating Suhoor and Iftar, time spent in traffic and rest time after eating. The average person can free up between four to six hours a day for Ibadah in Ramadan. (Makes me wonder why we can't do the same outside Ramadan)

Let's work with a smaller number though, as many people have other responsibilities like preparing meals and visiting relatives. Let's bring it down to a minimum three hours Ibaadah daily. If you work out that you just have three hours for extra Ibadah every day in Ramadan, that is still enough time to accomplish some major goals. Multiply three by 29 and you get 87 hours of Ibadah. 87 hours of optional Ibadah in one month can transform your life and increase your Taqwa dramatically.

This means if you just schedule in an hour of Qur'an reciting, an hour of studying Islam and an hour for du'a and dhikr, you can really get a lot done if you stick with that for the entire month. This brings us to point number three.

### 3. Set Clear Goals

Now that you know the overall goals of Ramadan and how much time you have available daily to chase these goals, the next step is to set S.M.A.R.T goals. To dedicate this time to. S.M.A.R.T means that the goal is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Let me give you an example.

If you make it a goal to study some Tafsir this Ramadan, the problem with this goal is that it is too vague (which Tafsir), not measurable (How many pages), and not attainable or realistic (does one page of Tafsir fulfil the goal or five books of Tafsir?)

A S.M.A.R.T goal would be: I want to complete studying this 800-page book of Tafsir this Ramadan. In order to complete 800 pages in 29 days, I need to read an average of 28 pages a day. This goal is:

**Specific** – It is a specific book of Tafsir you plan to read

**Measurable** – It is easy to measure and keep track of 28 pages daily

**Attainable** – It is possible to read 28 pages of Tafsir every day if you dedicate an hour to reading daily

**Realistic** – The book is at your level so it won't be too difficult to read

**Time-Bound** – Ramadan takes care of this naturally as all Ramadan goals are time-bound to 29 days

### 4. Allocate time to each goal

Now that your goals for Ramadan are clearly defined and you know how much time you have daily for Ibaadah, the next step is to combine this by allocating specific times daily for chasing each goal. Eg: If you have the goal of reading 30 pages of Tafsir daily and that will take you an hour, and you know that you

have an hour a day free every evening before Tarawih, then allocate that time to be your Tafsir time.

Likewise, allocate specific times of each day for each important act of worship. This means that you will set a specific time of the day for reciting Qur'an (perhaps before or after Fajr), making du'a (before Iftar), having a family Halaqa (perhaps after asr or after Tarawih) and any other goals you are working towards. Be specific as possible and stick to your times.

There may be days when you are unable to stick to the times completely due to elements beyond your control, but at least by having such a schedule, even on such days, you will make time to get these things done. If you are having an unusually busy day, instead of abandoning these goals completely, try halving them. So instead of not reading Tafsir at all for a day, try reading for half an hour or at least twenty minutes. In this way, you stay on track, even on your busiest days.

## **5. Utilize the early hours of the morning**

Depending on whether Ramadan falls in Summer and Winter in your country, this would refer to the time before or after Suhoor. In Summer countries, Suhoor is quite early and many people can't wake up too early before it. In that case, I recommend utilizing an hour after Suhoor for Ibadah.

In Winter countries, Suhoor is quite late so waking up an hour before it is easier. In such countries, I recommend waking up an hour earlier (or at least half an hour early) and dedicating that time to Qiyam Al-Layl (Tahajjud), du'a and reciting Qur'an.

The reason I emphasize the early mornings is because it is a time known for having Barakah (blessings) and it is a time when we are not pre-occupied with work and family obligations, making

it the best time of the day to dedicate to intense ibadah, a private time alone with Allah.

## **6. Schedule in a family Halaqa**

If this is not already one of your established habits, I recommend starting it this year. Ramadan is the perfect time for the family to bond and grow in iman together. The devils are locked up and everybody is more spiritual. This spirituality needs to be nurtured so that we can benefit from it after Ramadan. One way to do this is to establish a family Halaqah (study circle).

This can be done by getting together before Iftar or after Taraweeh, reading a chapter of an Islamic book (or listening to a lecture) then discussing its contents with each other. Involve every member of the family in the discussion, this will train the younger minds of the family to think and reflect, helping them grow into practicing thinking Muslims. The habit of having a family Halaqah is one that should continue after Ramadan.

## **7. Dedicate time daily for Qur'an**

Ramadan is the month of the Qur'an and so it is obvious that time must be dedicated daily to the Qur'an. In some communities, the practice exists of reciting the Qur'an very quickly each Ramadan to get it over with or to complete as many Qur'an recitals as possible. Instead of doing this, focus on reciting properly, studying the Tafsir and reflecting on its meanings. This will have a longer lasting effect on one's iman and Taqwa.

## **8. Avoid Multi-Tasking**

This is a general time management tip that applies outside Ramadan as well. In this book I have the following to say about multi-tasking:



Recent studies have proven that multi-tasking actually slows down productivity and causes sloppy work. When we multi-task, our brains are unable to give any task full attention and as a result, we end up with not much to show for it.

Modern time management experts all agree that focusing on one task at a time gets the task done faster with better quality than multi-tasking. If you are talking to someone, stop everything else you are doing and give them your full attention. If you are writing a book, close everything else and focus on the book and nothing else. If you are preparing for a meeting, focus on that alone and nothing else.

Do this and you will find yourself accomplishing the task in record time and producing really high quality work too. Then you will still have plenty of time for all the other things you were supposed to do while multi-tasking.

The way this applies to Ramadan is that for each goal, take out time to focus on it and devote proper attention to it. Don't try to recite Qur'an, while browsing through Facebook and taking care of a child all at the same time. You are unlikely to benefit from a Qur'anic recital unless you are giving it your full attention. The same applies to studying Tafsir or making du'a. Choose a place, time and situation in which you will have the least distractions and give the act of worship your undivided focus. This is why I recommend doing the acts of worship during the early parts of the morning, as it is the time when life is least busy and the mind less cluttered.

## **9. Fast from excessive socializing**

This includes both social media and physical socialization. Ramadan is the month of Itikaf. One of the goals of Itikaf is to take a break from our social lives so that we can focus on our

relationship with Allah. Even if you are unable to make Itikaf, you can still get this benefit in Ramadan by cutting down on socializing and dedicating more time to Ibaadah. Attend a few less Iftar parties, log into Facebook and Twitter for shorter durations and excuse yourself from unnecessary gatherings. Doing this will free up more time for worshipping Allah.

## 10. Stay Healthy

You cannot accomplish your goals if you are feeling lazy, weak, agitated or sleep-deprived. Some of us do too much during the first few days of Ramadan and end up without any energy to push on for the remainder of Ramadan. Don't let this happen to you this year. Pace yourself and take care of your body by getting enough sleep, eating healthy and staying hydrated.

The average person needs between 6-8 hours sleep a night, so make sure you are getting it, even if it means going to bed a bit earlier. Avoid sugary and oily foods and eat wholesome foods for both Suhoor and Iftaar. Research the types of food that give more energy and consume more of those. Drink a lot of water at night before bed as that will keep you hydrated during the day. Staying healthy includes taking care of our emotional health, but I will tackle that topic in details in a separate article insha Allah.

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[2015-part-1/](http://islamicselfhelp.com/2015/05/10-time-management-tips-for-ramadan-2015-part-1/)

on 5 May 2015)

## Appendix III

# Five Ways to overcome Failure

Failing to meet a goal is a natural part of progress. As the old proverb states: “If you aren’t failing, you aren’t trying anything new”. When it comes to our goals, we often are held back by one of two extremes:

1. We are afraid to fail, so we don’t even try
2. We are so sure we won’t fail, that we get disillusioned and give up as soon as we face our first taste of failure

Being afraid to fail is something I tackled in details in my book *Best of Creation: An Islamic Guide to Self-Confidence*. In this post, I want to tackle the second issue, dealing with failure itself when it hits us. So here are my five steps for overcoming failure:

### 1. Expect it to happen

It is naive to think that we can accomplish all of our goals in life without facing any tests and setbacks along the way. Tests and setbacks are a natural part of life, so we should expect them, plan for them, and deal with them wisely. Whether it comes to our spiritual goals or worldly goals, we will be tested, and it is these moments of test that show who we really are inside.

Expect things to go wrong. If they do, deal with them as planned. If they don’t, be grateful to Allah and take it as a gift from Allah. This makes it a Win/Win situation for you.

### 2. Accept Your Qadar

Qadar (Destiny) is a very misunderstood concept, regarding which people swing between a fatalistic viewpoint and its

opposite. Islam teaches us the middle way, but this is not the place for a detailed discussion on Qadar.

Related to our topic, if you made your plans, made your best effort and still failed to attain your goal, then do not despair or feel angry. There are things which are beyond our control and we must accept that what Allah decrees for us is best for us.

If your goal is noble, keep pursuing it knowing that when the time is right, Allah will open the door to help you achieve it. Accepting Qadar and knowing that Allah knows what is best for us gives us a sense of peace and contentment when we do not get what we want in this world.

### **3. Have a Plan B, C, D, E....**

The chances of accomplishing your goal at the very first instance is highly unlikely. So as brilliant as your current plan may be, you need to plan for when things don't go your way. Think about anything that could possibly go wrong and how you can deal with it. Make a backup plan, and a backup plan for that backup plan, so that no matter what goes wrong, you continue towards your goal through alternative routes.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions set off from Madinah to perform Umrah in Makkah, they were prevented from entering Makkah. This led to Plan B, signing a peace treaty with the leaders of Makkah, allowing them to perform the Umrah the next year. It meant fulfilling their goal of making Umrah one year later, but they accomplished their goal nonetheless, and so much more too. They did not turn back and give up, they found another way to accomplish the goal later.

#### **4. The Sabr Factor – Keep moving forward**

Reflect on the Battle of Uhud. The Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions faced a huge setback at Uhud and lost many good men. They did not despair or give up, the next day they were back on the march despite being injured. They pushed on towards their goal even when things weren't going their way, and that is one of the factors that opened the doors of victory for them.

This is the Sabr factor. Sabr is not a passive act of sitting back and doing nothing, expecting help to arrive in a miraculous fashion. Sabr is the active attribute of persevering, patiently planning, resisting the temptation to give up and moving forward in spite of the odds. If we want to accomplish anything, we need Sabr as there is no shortcut to true success in this world or the next. Every goal worth accomplishing requires bucket loads of Sabr, so make sure you stock up!

#### **5. Be Flexible**

While pursuing your goals, keep an eye out for better goals, nobler pursuits, greater callings or alternative routes to attain your goals. It may be that the goal you set for yourself at age 20 is not something you want to stick to for life. If while chasing that goal, you are introduced to something even better for you, then consider shifting focus. It may be that the earlier goal was temporary to lead you towards this better goal.

In the early years of Islam, many companions moved to Abyssinia, and settled there. Many years later, many of them migrated to Madinah as it had become a better environment to practice and serve Islam in. Likewise, it may be your goal to move to a certain land or practice a certain profession now, yet later in life better opportunities may open up for you. Consider

shifting focus as life is constantly changing, so do not stay too focused on the past, look for what is best for your family and yourself in the Afterlife primarily, and in this world as well.

These are five steps that keep me moving forward whenever I fail to meet a goal. I hope it inspires you to do the same.

(Originally published at

<http://islamicselfhelp.com/2015/07/5-ways-to-overcome-failure/>

on 31 July 2015)

## Glossary Of Islamic Terms

- Alhamdulillah – Arabic phrase meaning “All Praise is for God Alone”, it is customary for Muslims to say this when experiencing any success.
- Allah – The proper name of God, literally means the one true God.
- Alim – A scholar of Islamic studies.
- Asr – The late afternoon obligatory Salah which is prayed a few hours before sunset.
- Barakah – The Arabic word for blessings, the mysterious factor of something being more than it should.
- Bidah – Religious Innovation, refers to any changes to the religion of Islam and alteration away from its original purity.
- Caliphate – originally Khaleefat, a central Islamic leadership who has authority over the Muslim leaders of different countries.
- Darul Uloom – literally means “The place of knowledge”, traditional Islamic institutes are referred to by this name.
- Dawah – Inviting people to Islam and sharing the message of Islam with others.
- Deen – Way of life or religion, alternative Arabic word used to refer to Islam.
- Dhuhr – The early Afternoon obligatory Salah, which is prayed soon after midday.
- Dua – The Arabic word for prayer or supplication.
- Esha – The late night obligatory Salah, which is prayed after total darkness sets in or before bedtime.
- Fajr – The early morning obligatory Salah, prayed after dawn but before sunrise.
- Hajj – The fifth pillar of Islam, a pilgrimage to Makkah in the 12th month of the lunar calendar which every Muslim is required to make once in their lifetime if they can afford it.

Halal –	Permissible, refers to anything that it is permitted for Muslims to do or consume.
Haram –	Prohibited, refers to anything that Muslims are prohibited from doing, using or consuming.
Ibaadah –	Worship, refers to all ritual acts of worship which are part of Islam.
Iftar –	The opening fast meal after sunset for fasting Muslims.
Ihsaan –	Excellence, the Islamic teaching of striving for excellence in everything that we do.
Inshaa Allah –	A phrase meaning “If God Wills,” which Muslims say when discussing their plans for the future, as the future is entirely in God’s Hand.
Islam –	The name of the true religion brought by all the prophets, literally means submission to God.
Itikaaf –	The recommended act of worship of spending the last 10 days of Ramadan in the Masjid, worshipping God and even sleeping there.
Jumah –	The weekly Friday congregational prayer.
Juz –	A section of the Qur’an; the Qur’an is divided into 30 Juzes.
Khushoo –	concentration or inner peace, usually used to describe a Salah prayed with concentration and contentment.
Hadith –	A narration containing information about the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
Hadith	Al-Qudsi – A narration quoting the word of Allah, separate from the Qur’an.
Halaqah –	a gathering to study Islam and discuss its teachings.
Maghrib –	The evening obligatory Salah, prayed immediately after sunset.
Masjid –	The Muslim place of worship, also known as a Mosque.
Muhaasabah –	The practice of introspection and holding oneself accountable for one’s sins and mistakes.
Muslim –	A person who follows Islam, literally means someone who submits to God.



- Qadar – Predestination: the belief that God knows everything that will ever happen, and that nothing occurs without the Will of God.
- Qiyam Al-Layl – The late night optional prayers that Muslims are encouraged to pray during the last one third of the night.
- Qur'an – The final revealed book from Allah which Muslims believe to be the direct speech of Allah.
- Rakah – A unit of prayer in Salah. One Rakah comprises of standing, bowing and prostrating twice to God.
- Ramadan – The 9th month of the lunar calendar in which Muslims are required to fast.
- Rizq – Sustenance, refers to everything that God has provided us with. More commonly used to refer to wealth and food specifically.
- Rukuh – One of the required positions of Salah in which a person bows to God.
- Sabr – The Arabic word for patience, consistency, persistence, self-restraint and perseverance.
- Saheeh – In Hadith terminology, it refers to a Hadith which has an authentic chain of narrators.
- Sajdah – Prostration, one of the required parts of Salah in which a person places his/her head on the ground and prays to God.
- Salah – The Muslim ritual prayer. There are five obligatory Salah in a day, and fulfilling them is the second pillar of Islam.
- Salaam – Peace, it refers to the greeting of Muslims which is to wish peace upon each other. It also refers to a name of God i.e. As-Salaam which means the Source of Peace.
- Suhoor – The predawn meal which Muslims eat before beginning a day of fasting.
- Surah – A chapter of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is divided into 114 Surahs.
- Tafsir – The explanation of the meanings of the Qur'an by a qualified expert.

- Taraweh – The extra night prayers prayed by Muslims during the nights of Ramadan, usually prayed in groups of 8 or 20 Rakahs.
- Tawakul – The Islamic belief of trusting God to help you accomplish your goals, after making the necessary effort from your side.
- Tawheed – Monotheism, the belief that the universe was created by and is controlled by One Creator who is uniquely perfect and deserves our worship.
- Zakah – The third pillar of Islam, the requirement for wealthy Muslims to distribute 2.5% of their surplus wealth in charity on an annual basis.

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Abu Muawiyah Ismail Kamdar began his fulltime study of Islam at the age of thirteen. Since then, he has completed an Alim degree through the Darul Uloom in Durban, South Africa, as well as a BAIS (Bachelors of Arts in Islamic Studies) from the Islamic Online University.

Abu Muawiyah has been actively involved in Dawah since the age of 16, wrote his first book at the age of 23 and has served as a teacher and Islamic preacher at multiple institutes. He is also a Radio Presenter and the Head Tutorial Assistant of the Islamic Online University.

Abu Muawiyah also works as an author, home-schools his four children, and blogs at <http://islamicselfhelp.com> and <http://abumuawiyah.com>.

How does he manage all of the above? That's what this time management book is all about! 😊

# More Books & Media by Abu Muawiyah Ismail Kamdar

## Books:<sup>1</sup>

Homeschooling 101: What to expect in your first year

Best of Creation: An Islamic Guide to Self-Confidence

Having Fun the Halal Way: Entertainment in Islam

Themes Of the Qur'an

Verse Of The Day Collection

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<sup>1</sup> Information about each of these books can be found at <http://abumuawiyah.com/books/>

# Notes







